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THIRTY YEARS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

THIRTY YEARS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

AN INDUSTRIAL RETROSPECT

BY

ROSE E. SQUIRE

O.B.E.

(LATE OF THE HOME OFFICE)

WITH A FOREWORD BY

SIR EDWARD TROUP

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FOREWORD

THE most important event in the whole history of the Factory Acts was the appointment of factory inspectors in 1833. Then for the first time factory legislation was enforced by men appointed and paid by Government, independent and impartial, and soon to become, by reason of their full-time and permanent employment, experts in their work. This system, adopted by the Government of the day with little idea of its ultimate influence, speedily produced results so remarkable that it has been almost universally followed as the one effective means of enforcing not only factory regulations but social legislation of every sort.

The extension of the system to the appointment of women inspectors was in its turn the most important event on the industrial side of the Home Office in the forty years that I served in that department. In the extent of its influence it was transcended by none of the beneficial measures passed by Parliament, and without it many of them would have been impossible or ineffective. Lord Oxford and Asquith appears in his recent historical work to be justly proud of the fact that the first women inspectors were

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appointed by him, for he sets out in full the Cabinet memorandum in which he proposed an increase of their number.

The history of the Women's Inspectorate and its work has been written by Dame Adelaide Anderson in her "Women in the Factory." That comprehensive work leaves no room at present for another history; but ample opening remains for a personal story, told by one engaged in the work, of her own experiences, her successes and failures, her enthusiasms and her adventures—a story which will show vividly the progress made in thirty years, and throw useful side-lights on the measures required for further advance.

Such a story is presented by Miss Squire in this volume: and for writing it she is singularly well qualified, if only by the unrivalled variety of her experiences in the many branches of industrial administration. She was successively the sanitary inspector of a local authority, a peripatetic factory inspector under the Home Office, senior inspector in charge of an immense industrial district, and deputy to the chief woman inspector at headquarters. She served as a special investigator under the Royal Commission on the Poor Law. The war called her to work as a member of the Welfare Committee and as Director of the Women's Welfare Department: and after the war she was Director of the Women's Training Department. When the period of reconstruction was over, she returned to the Home Office and was appointed a "principal" on its administrative staff—the first

woman to hold such a post. In her time she visited every class of factory, workshop, and workplace in every great town and in many county districts of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. She explored the depths of a Cornish mine to track the sources of disease, routed out cruel oppressors of the poor in the wilds of Donegal, and fought for the rights of fisher girls in the Shetland Islands.

While in these various employments she has gained an intimate knowledge and sympathetic understanding of all sorts and conditions of men, women and children, she possesses the art of narrating her experiences in an easy, natural and lucid style, and of showing in a few effective words the lessons to be learned alike from the successes and failures of law or administration.

Of the many lessons to be learned from her experiences there are two that I should like specially to emphasize.

One is the essential value of team work in all matters of administration. The day of the solitary director of affairs is past. To meet the complex problems of to-day requires almost always the joint efforts of persons possessing different qualifications and acting in co-operation ; and only if they work shoulder to shoulder as a team can success be attained. The problem, for instance, of "T.N.T. poisoning" had to be tackled by the united work of Women Inspectors to trace the sufferers, of Medical Inspectors to diagnose the disease and find the remedy, of the Home Office to make protective regulations, and of War Office Authorities to carry

them out. It was a problem that could not be solved except by united action.

The other is the importance, in all spheres of administration, of constant personal contact between the representatives of government and the persons whose action government seeks to regulate in the general interest. No good factory regulations can be made, and no regulations however good, can be carried out, unless the inspector works in friendly consultation with the employer and the employed. Offenders must sometimes be dealt with drastically, but the ordinary course of administration ought to be, and is, I believe, in all branches of the Home Office, conducted far more by consultation, advice, and friendly warning than by appeal to the compulsory provisions of the law. Page after page of Miss Squire's volume impresses this lesson on the reader.

Apart from its lessons, the book, as a simple well-told story, is full of interest. One feels as one reads what keen pleasure Miss Squire took in her work, even when it entailed personal hardship and occasionally something very like personal danger. Not a few passages suggest to the reader that the book might appropriately have been called "The Joyous Adventures of Rose Squire."

EDWARD TROUP.

November 8th, 1926.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is not to add yet another volume to the growing library of works dealing with industry and with factories and factory legislation. Still less do I purpose to present pen-portraits of the many interesting persons, great and small, in whose company some part of my thirty years' official journey has been made, or whose lives have just touched mine in passing. My object is rather to make some contribution, from personal experience during thirty years in the Public Service, to the storehouse of facts which illustrate progress made in the improvement of industrial and social conditions in that period.

The Public Service, which embraces matters of high policy and affects every class of His Majesty's subjects, has its intimately personal side where the individual officer deals with the individual citizen. It is by means of such very human intercourse that the law of the land is applied in particular cases for the public good. Moreover, new legislation is gradually so forged out from the accumulated experience, gained by numerous individual records, as to be an instrument adapted to fit the needs of this or that class of the community. It is true to say that the more highly the personal

side of the Public Service has been developed, the greater has been the benefit secured. The more intimate the understanding by a Government Department of the conditions of life of the persons whose interests it serves, the better will the means intended for their benefit be fitted to that end. The closer the contact of the Government with the governed through the personnel of its staff, the less will friction be caused in administration. The recognition of this principle is seen in modern practice. For example, methods of selecting candidates for posts as inspectors, and the like, by means of "interviewing boards" capable of estimating the character and personal worth of those appearing before them, are gradually being employed in preference to dependence solely on examination tests. Again, Royal Commissions or Departmental Committees appointed to report to Government on matters of public concern are careful to secure evidence from persons who have first-hand experience of the facts. Further, there is apparently an increasing readiness on the part of Government Departments to consult their expert officers, who are in personal contact with the section of the public affected, before undertaking legislation or making orders or regulations. On the part of the inspectors themselves there has grown up in the past thirty years the practice more and more of calling into conference associations of employers and workers.

In the following pages the personal contact between the Government official and employers and workers is illustrated from my own experience.

Not because it claims to be unique, but rather because it is typical of those methods, little understood by people in general, by which a great and very human department, the Home Office, carries out its work for the public good.

The appointment of women as inspectors of factories and workshops in 1893, and the use made of their services from time to time on committees, or as investigators attached to Royal Commissions, or in specialised work in various Government Departments, all this has been initiated and developed in my official life-time and forms part of its history. Through the gradual unfolding of opportunity, and as part of the day-to-day duty, came to me in my official capacity the meeting with employers, and with women and girls, men and boys, in every form of industry and in every part of the United Kingdom. Acquaintance was made not only with the workers while at their work but by evening visits in their homes; not only with those on the active list but with the "cripples of industry" while laid aside by accident or disease, and (through work as investigator for the Royal Commission on the Poor Law) with the saddest of all cases, those men and women "down and outs" whom industrial evils had made paupers.

The following account of some of my experiences has been undertaken in the hope that the record of past history, as seen through the eyes of a Civil Servant in the course of her work, may be of service in promoting still further progress in industrial betterment. This record falls naturally into three

sections, pre-war, war, and post-war, each period having its own industrial characteristics which had a direct influence on the period which followed. It has been necessary to group together the facts relating to the chief matters of interest in order that, while preserving in general outline the sequence of events, wearisome repetition of details concerning the same subject may be avoided. The plan adopted in the following chapters is in each to deal with the subject which occupied a predominant place during the years which stand at the head of the chapter. This is not an arbitrary arrangement, but one suggested by a bird's-eye view of the work as it was done during the period of thirty years.

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ONLY by an effort of memory is it possible now to recall the disapproval and even dismay with which the news was received among relatives and friends that a young woman of the family had become "an inspector." It was not in my girlhood expected that daughters of professional men would take up a career. Indeed there was very little opening for them if need to earn a livelihood arose except teaching for the highly educated, and the dreadful dullness of a "companion's" lot for the incompetent. We took it for granted that while our brothers went to public school and University we had governesses in various subjects at home. When at seventeen or

eighteen years of age we " came out " we had in a large circle of friends summer and winter seasons of entertaining and being entertained, and at other times no lack of occupation in parish and other social-service activities. But changes come into the most secure and sheltered lives, and at thirty-two I was seeking a career and a livelihood. The distinction of being a pioneer may now be claimed with pardonable pride, but in 1893 the adoption of such a strange and " unladylike " occupation as that of inspector was a matter calling for explanation or apology—it was " not quite nice " and the eccentricity should preferably be ignored. Such a view was not confined to members of any one class of society. Public opinion was opposed to women leaving the sphere of home ordained for them, and in the Civil Service itself an invasion of women was viewed with little short of dismay. Mr. Asquith (now Lord Oxford), during a debate in the House of Commons on August 5th, 1921, said, in support of a motion that women should be appointed to, and continue to hold, posts in the Civil Service under the same conditions as men, " I may indeed claim . . . to be a pioneer in the matter. When I was at the Home Office nearly thirty years ago I introduced the appointment for the first time of women as inspectors of factories. It was considered by the State officials at this date to be a terrible proposition. They shook their heads and they did not sleep comfortably at nights. It would be an interesting revelation of the progress of opinion in this

matter if one could turn up some of the old Minutes of the Home Office in those days. It was suggested that the women would get their petticoats in the machines, that there would be loss of life, and also it was suggested that it would be unseemly that they should go about at night alone in the workshops. . . . We made a modest beginning . . . but we have not gone back on it. On the contrary it has been developed upon an ever-increasing scale and all must admit that it has had most beneficial results, particularly in regard to women and girls in our factories and workshops."[1]

It was in the same year, *i.e.*, 1893, in which the Home Office first appointed two women as inspectors of factories that the Kensington Vestry (now the Borough Council) likewise took its courage in both hands and at the earnest request of the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. T. Orme Dudfield, appointed two women as inspectors of workshops to carry out the duty newly placed on local authorities of enforcing sanitation in such places. Thus, in 1893, four women became inspectors, Miss Abraham and Miss Paterson appointed under Government by the Home Office in June, and Miss Deane and myself in November under the local authority in Kensington. The immediate cause in both cases was new duties imposed by Acts of Parliament passed in 1891—the Amending Factory Act and the Public Health (London) Act. The former, while it imposed

[1] "Parliamentary Debates," Friday, 5th August, 1921, Vol. 145, No. 114–1903.

further work upon the factory inspectors, transferred certain of their powers and duties relating to sanitation in workshops to local authorities. The Medical Officer of Kensington, in his annual report of 1891, urged upon his Council the necessity these Acts created of more sanitary inspectors to overtake these duties. In 1893 he returned to the charge and pleaded that " in view of the number of cases of overcrowding and other unsanitary conditions in workshops and laundries in which women were employed," which had been reported to him, he was " convinced not only of the necessity for systematic inspection but also that some of the duties involved were of too special and delicate a nature to be discharged satisfactorily by male inspectors." He recommended in a special report " the tentative appointment of two ladies to inspect and supervise workshops and laundries where women were employed." The Council agreed, and in October Miss Deane and I were selected from a number of applicants, and after being interviewed by the Vestry were appointed.

I began work on November 1st, 1893, Miss Deane following a little later. We had both only started training at the beginning of that year under the National Health Society with a view to qualifying as lecturers on hygiene, nursing and first aid for that society. After a course of study and lectures, and practical nursing as pupil probationers at the Chelsea Infirmary, and afterwards as district nurses with the Queen's Jubilee Nurses, we obtained by examination the society's diploma in anatomy,

physiology, hygiene, nursing and first aid. Such qualifications would of themselves scarcely be reckoned now sufficient to secure women an appointment to an important post, but they were at least equal to those produced by our competitors. The training in fact proved to be exceedingly useful in the exercise of our duties both during our work under the sanitary authority and also afterwards when we went to the Home Office. In tracing the value of the personal side of the public service the question of training the staff for their duties is of primary importance. Much might be said on that subject, but it may suffice here to offer the opinion that a study of even elementary anatomy and physiology provides a background for dealing with matters affecting health which no other branch of knowledge can give. And an acquaintance at first hand with common sickness and casualties, and personal contact with patients in the wards of a hospital, gives an intimacy with human nature which nothing else can supply. The nurse in attendance on the sick is admitted into confidences which are shared with no other. District nursing in the homes of the poorest (which necessitates not infrequently taking over the whole situation created by the laying low of the wife and mother) affords even more than the hospital a close relationship with all the intimate cares and makeshifts of the poor,—as well as a disclosure of wonderful heights of patience and heroism.

With such training and qualifications, then, we plunged into the untried position of inspectors

of workshops, and were turned loose on our respective districts, Miss Deane in South and I in North Kensington. We set forth and had a strenuous six months getting our experience in dressmakers' and tailors' workrooms and in laundries. The latter fell chiefly to my care, and as they were at that time outside the provisions of the Factory Act, and only subject to inspection as " workplaces " under the Public Health Act, my life lacked no spice of adventure and even of humour. The laundry district known as " the Potteries " was notorious in those days. Every little house in a network of mean streets, in some respects almost rural in character, was a hand-laundry. Steam laundries were few and far between, wash-houses generally in back kitchens or basements had undrained wooden or earthen floors, soiled linen was flung down anywhere and the children and the cats played among it. Ironing was carried on in the living rooms (or rooms which had lately been such); dirty paper hung loose from the begrimed walls, the steam from wet clothes drying overhead condensed and dripped on the shoulders of the ironers, sweating at their work of polishing shirts and collars in intense heat from the red-hot stoves for heating the iron, all windows closed under the mistaken idea that drying of the suspended sheets would thereby be accelerated. The laundry workers in those days, instead of being as now bright, well-dressed, self-respecting young women, were mostly middle-aged and draggled, downtrodden, wretched creatures, ill-paid, and constant

sufferers from rheumatism and from ulcerated legs due to long standing. The bad conditions on the one hand made them wretched, and on the other attracted to the laundries only such as could find no chance of better employment. There was then no legal regulation, as there was in other trades, of the hours of work in laundries, and the work dragged on hugger-mugger through the week, culminating every week-end in a frantic rush and scurry until it was finished at a late hour on Saturday night, or on Sunday. The inspector could do nothing to redress the constant complaint of seventy and eighty hours a week, and of irregular meal times—a snack being snatched at intervals. The workers toiled on fortified by the morning and afternoon visits to the laundry of the pot-man from a neighbouring public-house with the beer cans slung from a pole carried in each hand.

It was into conditions thus briefly sketched that hygienic improvement was gradually introduced—cleansing, drainage, ventilation, these in their most elementary form could at least (by compulsion where instruction failed) be secured. Opposition from owners of slum property who were members of the council under which the inspectors served was not the least of our difficulties. It early became apparent that the women inspectors whom the Vestry had appointed "tentatively for six months," if they were to continue and were to be effective, must be given a recognized official position which carried with it the full statutory powers of a sanitary inspector authorized by the Local

Government Board (the Ministry of Health was not created until many years later). In qualifying for such a position, hitherto restricted to men, it was necessary to sit for the same examination. Accordingly we entered for this and obtained the sanitary inspector's certificate. We passed not only in the law relating to public health, and in other subjects bearing on our special work, but also in plumbing, building construction, and meat inspection. Even then the Local Government Board had qualms about recognizing *women* as sanitary inspectors! It seemed that the whole structure of society was in jeopardy from such a departure from precedent! A period of anxiety ensued, during which a sense of injustice not unnaturally rankled in our minds, before the Board gave way. Thus another barrier in woman's path was down!

About this time, the summer of 1894, Miss Lucy Deane was appointed a factory inspector in the Home Office and Miss Annie Duncan (afterwards the first woman factory inspector in New South Wales) became my colleague for six months. Then in the name of economy the Vestry decided not to appoint a second woman, saying that " the main evils had been remedied," and I was required to carry on for the whole borough alone. The work, in fact, in certain directions had been increasing. It was true that the flagrant evils had been remedied, but as these diminished other matters which needed reform became apparent and were insistently pressed on our attention. For many of these there was no legal remedy at that time. We began to pass on

such matters as excessive cold or heat of workrooms, injurious steam or dust, long hours, absence of half-holidays, Sunday labour, to the Vestry for consideration in connection with amending legislation. In regard to these we urged reforms many of which finally took shape in the Factory Act of 1895. There were now three women factory inspectors at the Home Office, and these, like myself (but over a wider field), were accumulating information as to the exact needs of the women and young persons, and we met together for discussion of these matters with reference to the amending Factory and Workshop Bill, 1895.

Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., and his niece, Miss Gertrude Tuckwell, threw themselves with all their gifts, their charm, and the driving force of their personalities, into promoting the cause of the laundries, and my introduction to them came during the period which led up to the Bill and its passage through Parliament. The acquaintance thus formed was followed by years of close association in the combat with industrial evils.

The memory is still vivid of those exciting days which followed the introduction into Parliament of the Bill which afterwards became the Factory and Workshop Act, 1895, when in the Standing Committee, clause after clause bearing upon the matters which had been part of my daily life was debated. These were not in my case academic questions, but were seen as strands woven into the fabric of the life of countless women and girls. It seemed to me irksome that men, ignorant for

the most part of the meaning of the words they uttered, took part in the discussion, while I who knew so much had to impart in a few hasty sentences first-hand information on practical details to Mr. John Burns or other members hurrying out of their seats to be " put wise " on such and such points ! No doubt, being young and inexperienced then in official life, my part seemed to be more important than it really was. The years have brought a greater sense of proportion, but they have also brought demonstration again and again of the truth that facts accurately observed and recorded are the stuff out of which effective laws are framed. Nothing can safely be substituted for that part of the " machinery of government " which provides means for the collection and consideration of first-hand evidence of facts.

Reference has already been made to the fact that as a sanitary inspector my duties were confined to sanitary matters, but that incidentally questions as to hours of work and meal-times and other conditions affecting health, were thrust upon my attention. These things, however, were, I knew, the concern of the Home Office inspectors and must therefore be rigorously excluded from all official dealings with the officer of the local authority. This in practice occasioned no little disappointment and misunderstanding on the part of employers and workers who, receiving for the first time a visit of inspection from a woman inspector, sought information or help on all matters affecting employment. This state of affairs affected me in

two ways. First it strengthened my determination to change my position for that of a factory inspector as soon as possible in order to deal with all the wider problems of industry, an ambition soon gratified. Secondly, it impressed upon my mind the view that "dual inspection," that is to say inspection of the same premises by the two separate sets of inspectors working under separate authorities, but each dealing with the same persons in respect of working conditions, was wasteful, irritating and ineffective. This opinion was strengthened by all my subsequent experience. It is probably true to say that now most of the persons intimately concerned, *i.e.*, the employers and employed, would welcome the disappearance of such "dual control" and would prefer to see placed under the Government inspector the administration of all regulations for safety, health and welfare in all premises which come under the Factory Act.

The artificial distinction drawn at present by the Factory Act between "factories" and "workshops" (the one being for all practical purpose a place where machinery is used and the other where hand work only is done) is out-of-date and the merging of all into the one class, *i.e.*, factories, which was proposed in the Factories Bill of 1924, and again in the recently introduced Bill of 1926, has much to recommend it. With the deletion of the word "workshop" from our factory legislation the separate administration of sanitary provisions in such places by officers of the local authority would disappear (except in certain cases). All

would come alike under the trained and experienced Home Office staff. The local authorities would, however, still retain their responsibility for enforcing in all industrial works, as in other premises in their area, the provisions of the Public Health Acts relating to drainage, water supply and kindred matters, and these duties would afford ample scope for the trained staff of sanitary inspectors in addition to their many other functions.

It is so usual to speak of factories and workshops collectively, that the great variety of conditions represented in that category is seldom realized. I have noticed that when the subject of factory conditions or factory legislation is under discussion, those who take part in it, outside the official circle, have, as a rule, one kind of industry only in mind and all their suggestions or criticisms are coloured by their own limited experience. This is, of course, only natural, but a reminder of the wide scope of terms so commonly used may not be here out of place. At the one end of the scale is a single room in a dwelling-house, or the shed in a little garden or back yard. Here the occupier, be it man or woman, works at one simple process assisted by one or may be two employed persons (perhaps a neighbour's boy or girl just left school). At the other end of the scale is the vast building or group of buildings covering many acres, and employing thousands of persons in a multitude of distinct processes aided by intricate machinery. Incidentally, I may comment on the fact that each of such places counts equally as *one* on the factory

inspector's register, and a visit to either is also officially recorded as *one*. Yet a thorough inspection of the one may occupy fifteen minutes at most, and a day does not suffice for the other. This is well known to the superior officers at headquarters who have themselves been practical inspectors in their younger days. To the general public, as well as to Members of Parliament and even the high Government officials, numbers of factories and workshops and numbers of visits are apt to represent some standard of measurement which has no relation to fact! Yet differences in size, great as these are, is the least important of the variations comprised in the establishments classed as "factories and workshops." Compare the court dressmaker's workshop with the gut-scraping or rag-sorting workshop,—the biscuit factory with the iron and steel smelting works,—the wholesale clothiers with the Pottery. Even to those whose acquaintance with these things is of the slightest the words will at once conjure up before their minds pictures of conditions widely differing one from the other. The Factory Inspector knows that in each of these, and in a long list of other classes of industries, the circumstances in each present problems so diverse as to preclude generalization. It is this intimate knowledge of the facts which makes it so difficult for the inspector to speak or write *generally* of factories or workshops. I would add it is the employer's intimate knowledge of his own industry, and usually of no other, that makes his criticism of Factory Acts and Regulations intended for universal

application so caustic. If the legal restrictions or prohibitions are not needed, or are not applicable to one industry, they are to another. This diversity within the broad definition of factory and workshop can only reasonably be met by laying down wide general principles for all and legislating for special industries and special circumstances by means of orders and regulations for such groups. This may usefully be borne in mind by those who are disposed to cavil at the tendency of modern factory legislation to leave details to be applied by means of " Order of the Secretary of State."

CHAPTER II

FACTORY INSPECTORS AND FACTORY LAWS

1896–1899

Appointed a Factory Inspector—The Factory Act, 1895—The Truck Act, 1896—Setting to work—"New Brooms"—Development of the Factory Department—The Story of the Women's Branch.

THE Factory Act of 1895 came into force in January, 1896. On the 20th of that month I commenced work as H.M. Inspector of Factories, having been duly nominated and qualified by examination and appointed by the Home Secretary in December, 1895. I was the only candidate at the Civil Service Examination, which was held by the Commissioners for me alone. My terror of such an ordeal was not rendered less by the fact that a thick yellow fog, of a sulphurous density peculiar to the London of those days, enfolded the world. My train was delayed until long past the hour fixed in the notice, which bore the awful warning that unpunctuality would disqualify a candidate! The fog filled with impenetrable gloom the vast room where I sat at one of the many desks watched by the two men in attendance. An essay on the relative merits of music, painting, and sculpture by its very irrelevance afforded me a welcome mental release from

my surroundings and restored some of the confidence which a tussle with vulgar fractions had shattered. Dictation from one of Sir Walter Scott's novels read in the broadest Glasgow accent, almost unintelligible to my Saxon ears, amused while it somewhat baffled me. The viva voce examination in the Factory Law of that day, *i.e.*, the Factory Acts of 1878, 1883 and 1891, on the following day was more cheerful. The discovery that my practical experience in applying some of those legal provisions enabled me to score not once nor twice, and that a retentive memory was duly functioning, carried me happily along!

We were now four women at the Home Office with the full status of H.M. Inspectors of Factories, and entrusted with the exercise of all the duties so far as employment of women, young persons and children were concerned, and we formed an integral part of the staff of men under the Chief Inspector of Factories, Mr. Sprague Oram. It now seems strange to recall that no office room was assigned to us until some time later, the Chief Inspector gave us verbal instructions and looked after us with a fatherly interest. The whole arrangement regarded from present standpoint seems extraordinarily simple and informal. Then, and for a long time to come, all official correspondence was written by hand; if copies were required copying ink and a hand press were used—we had no clerks and there was no typing ; the telephone, if in use at all, was a luxury for highest officials only.

Like my colleagues I was duly provided with a warrant, signed by the Home Secretary, which, after certifying the appointment, proceeded to authorise the holder "to enter and inspect all factories, workshops, laundries and other places under the Act, and all schools in which she has reasonable cause to believe that children employed in a factory or workshop or laundry are for the time being educated, and to examine all persons found therein and to exercise such other powers as may be necessary in carrying the Act into effect, and in pursuance of the Act I hereby authorise the said Rose Elizabeth Squire to prosecute, conduct or defend before a court of summary jurisdiction or justice any information, complaint, or other proceeding arising under the Act, or in discharge of her duty as such inspector."

Thus equipped I sallied forth alone, being entrusted with the congenial task of "bringing the laundries under the Factory Act" by instructing employers and employed in the intricacies of the new legislation. I was destined through the years to come to see every prophecy of the "ruin" which State regulation would bring upon the laundry trade falsified and the industry improve by degrees in every respect, better premises, better methods of work, shorter hours, a well paid, first-class staff of employees gradually superseding the "washerwoman" of old.

Work of the more routine nature was frequently interrupted by more special inquiries and investigations in every part of the United Kingdom, and

this kind of work increased as years went on. The women inspectors were freelances, not attached to any area, but sent hither and thither to any part of the United Kingdom in which the need for looking after women or children was most urgent. The men, on the other hand, had districts assigned to them, and the district inspector was responsible for all factories and workshops in his area. The introduction of peripatetic women inspectors who made unexpected, sporadic inroads into any district was a bold step, fraught with possibilities of friction! That on the whole the experiment worked as smoothly as it did is a testimony to the good sense and comradeship which existed in the Civil Service and to the good feeling and fellowship that, so far as my own experience goes, increased with time and continued right through the changes and chances of thirty years. Of course we women inspectors were a troublesome innovation, and if as " new brooms " we swept sometimes with more zeal than discretion, at least we got rid of a vast mass of ugly accretions which were spoiling industrial life for women and children. We had read with incredulity the reports of the women commissioners to the Royal Commission on Women's Employment, 1893, and we went forth to find in being conditions as bad or worse. Many of these conditions could probably have been remedied before under the existing law had there been enough inspectors to get round the factories and (more important still) to be able to spend the time necessary to bring evils to light and to obtain

sufficient evidence to prosecute, but some of the evils were awaiting the remedies provided by the Amending Act of 1901. Another useful instrument soon put into the hands of the women inspectors, particularly for the relief of women and girls, was the Truck Act, 1896, restricting the rights of employers to make deductions from wages. (See under Chapter VI.)

The war waged, with such weapons as we had, against dirt, disease, overwork, sweating and accidents was full of adventure, and it was not without its victories. These when won contributed towards the removal of hindrances in the onward march of progress towards a goal not yet reached, but coming more clearly into sight. Some record of these adventures and of the progress made in the past thirty years is attempted in the following chapters. First, however, I may, I think, appropriately pause here to glance back over the main stages of development through which the Factory Department of the Home Office has passed in the thirty years during which I have been connected with it. The introduction of women on to the staff of factory inspectors in 1893 has been referred to already. It is interesting in passing to note that this innovation took place just sixty years after the system of factory inspection was first introduced by the Factory Act of 1833. In 1892 the staff of H.M. Inspectors of Factories, consisting entirely of men, numbered sixty-five. It consisted of the chief inspector, Mr. R. E. Sprague Oram (appointed in 1861), and five superintending

inspectors stationed respectively in London, Wakefield, Birmingham, and Glasgow (two in London, of whom one was at that time in charge of workshops only), 39 inspectors in charge of districts and resident in the chief industrial centres, with 20 junior inspectors working under them. The total number of registered factories then was 17,762. In 30 years time the number of factories had risen to 139,920, and the total places under inspection to just under 300,000. The total strength of the staff had been raised to 205, including 32 women. In 1923 there were at work 199 inspectors. These included, besides the chief inspectors, three deputy chiefs (one a woman), ten superintending inspectors (two women), eight women deputy superintending inspectors, 76 district inspectors (six women), 81 other inspectors (16 women), five medical inspectors (one woman), five engineers, five electrical inspectors and five inspectors of textiles particulars of wages. Thus there were 165 men and 34 women. The number in 1925 was approximately the same. The insufficiency of the number of inspectors to cope with the task entrusted to them is obvious and has been the subject of adverse criticism for many years. The need for more factory inspectors, particularly more women, has been urged by workpeople and employers repeatedly during my experience. The matter has been kept constantly before Parliament, whatever Government has been in power, by questions in the House of Commons and annually during the debate on the Home

Office vote. The workers clamoured for more inspectors because they said they did not see them often enough in the factories. The employers urged more appointments because, as in the early days of factory legislation, " leading employers were anxious to carry out the law and desired that their competitors should be compelled to follow their example."[1]

The principal points of interest in the gradual development of the staff during the period under review are, first, the introduction of women; second, the appointment of professionally qualified inspectors (medical, engineering and electrical); third, the elimination of a lower grade of inspector's assistants, and, finally in 1921, the abolition of the women's branch and the fusion of men and women into one staff with the object of their becoming interchangeable. As regards the women's branch which existed during the whole time I was an inspector the following changes took place in its history. After the short experimental stage when the two or three women inspectors worked as peripatetic officers under the personal direction of the chief inspector, the senior among them Miss May Abraham (Mrs. H. J. Tennant) was entrusted with general supervision of their work, and in 1896 was promoted as superintending inspector to direct the small staff of five women organised under her direction. On her retirement on marriage the following year the women's branch of the inspectorate

[1] "Factory Inspection: Historical development and present organisation." Report 1923, International Labour Office, Geneva.

was formed under Miss (now Dame) Adelaide Anderson with the title of Principal Lady Inspector of Factories. She, under the chief inspector, guided and developed the work of the branch with its increasing numbers and responsibilities for 24 years.[1] In 1903 the three other women who formed the first little band, Miss Paterson, Miss Deane and myself, were given the title and position of Senior Lady Inspector with a small rise in salary, which we were informed was personal to us individually. For ten years after its formation all the women continued to do their peripatetic work from London, but in 1908 an important change was made. The senior members of the women's branch were "planted out" in the principal industrial divisions, with offices of their own in Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow, a staff of women working under each senior lady inspector. The senior in London acted also as Deputy Principal Lady Inspector. This organisation was further developed as years went on. In 1912 some shifting of the personnel followed on the appointment of Miss Paterson to be a National Health Insurance Commissioner for Scotland, and I returned to London as Deputy Principal Lady Inspector of Factories. (Chapter X.)

During the war years the women's branch received some considerable accession to its numbers: women having experience of social service were appointed (without examination) as temporary

[1] "Women in the Factory—an administrative adventure, 1893 to 1921," by Adelaide Mary Anderson D.B.E., M.A. Murray, 1922.

inspectors to meet the depletion of the staff by the employment of the men in the army and in other forms of national service. The readjustment of work consequent on war-time emergency no doubt contributed to bring about the greatest change of all, namely, the reorganisation of the Factory Department in 1921, which abolished the separate women's branch, as already mentioned. The posts of Principal and Deputy Principal Lady Inspector having ceased to exist Miss Adelaide Anderson retired from the service in May, 1921, the honour of Dame of the British Empire being conferred on her to mark the public appreciation of her unique and splendid service. I became a Principal in the administrative side of the Home Office. It is amusing to recall in passing that we women inspectors were officially known first as female inspectors, then as lady inspectors, and finally as women inspectors. The change in convention as the years went by perhaps reflects the change that has taken place in women's position in the Civil Service in that period!

During these eventful years in the history of the Factory Department it may be of interest to record that nine Acts of Parliament affecting factory conditions have been placed on the Statute Book, and that 32 codes of Regulations for Dangerous Trades have been made. Of Home Secretaries 12 have held sway over the Home Office since 1893. Of permanent Under Secretaries of State Sir Edward Troup, K.C.B., filled that office for 14

years, from 1908 to 1922, having already served in the Home Office since 1880.

What the Department in all its manifold activities owes to him it is not for such a humble member of it as myself to attempt to say. To him and the other permanent officials of my time, including five successive chief inspectors of factories whom I have known, I must express here my gratitude for kindly help and friendship, and for inspiration and example in all that is characteristic of the British Civil Service.

CHAPTER III

A HEALTHY FACTORY

Enforcing sanitation—Essentials of a healthy factory—Cleanliness—Old and new standards—Cold workrooms—Hot processes.

IN this and the two following chapters I shall endeavour to sketch the main lines on which general factory inspection proceeded in respect of *health*. In this Chapter I deal with sanitation, in Chapter IV. with industrial disease and dangerous trades, and in Chapter V. with hours of employment and intervals for rest. No exhaustive treatment of these big subjects is attempted, as they have been fully dealt with in published official reports of the Factory Department, particularly in the annual reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories. Anyone interested in such matters will find ample details in readable form and much food for thought there, and not least in the pages written year by year in the lady inspectors' section, from 1893 to 1913. I have myself contributed in the past perhaps more than my share to these graphic records of factory life as it used to be! Here I am concerned merely to draw attention to the progress made in industrial betterment as a result of laws enforced, and personal contact established, between the Government servant on

the one hand and the employer and the worker on the other.

The essentials of a healthy factory may be summed up in the words, clean walls and ceilings, clean floors, good circulation of fresh air free from dust and fumes, a temperature neither too high nor too low, suitable and sufficient sanitary accommodation. In all these elements of sanitation we may say without fear of contradiction that enormous progress has been made in the last thirty years. The workpeople of the present day not only share with others the longer expectation of life which we are assured by experts in Public Health has been secured to us in the last thirty or forty years, but industrial life is also immeasurably more healthy. Progress in general hygiene and sanitation is remarkable, and so is also the progress made in controlling and overcoming the special risks arising in particular industries and processes of manufacture.

No doubt general appreciation of the value of cleanliness has greatly increased in the last half century. The revelations of science respecting the part played by dust and foul air in spreading disease have, to a great extent, become common knowledge and have affected the habits of the people. From the very early days of factory legislation the need for cleanly premises was recognised. The opening words of the present Factory Act, 1901, are "a factory shall be kept in a cleanly state"; these were also the first words of the preceding Act of 1878, and before that they stood in the Act of 1864.

At first sight these words seem to be as clear and simple a requirement as the most captious critic of Acts of Parliament could desire. It might well be thought that so reasonable and obvious a demand surely needs no Government Department to explain its meaning, or army of inspectors to enforce it. In practice, however, the position has proved to be far otherwise. Experience has shown that not only has it needed constant vigilance from the inspectors to secure a recognition of the necessity of a fair standard of cleanliness in factories and workshops, but that even the meaning of the words used is open to doubt, and that opinions widely differ as to what constitutes a "cleanly state." Quite soon it was found necessary for periodic limewashing of walls and ceilings in order to secure that these were clean. The present law requires annual limewashing and also the annual washing of all painted surfaces which are to be repainted every seven years. We still cling to this definite requirement "limewash," even though we may have lost our faith in the virtue of lime as a precaution against disease and are quite prepared to accept whitewashing or even colour washing instead. Of our forefathers' zeal for limewash we have abundant evidence in our old churches, where stonework and priceless wall frescoes were covered with it impartially, and it was dutifully renewed annually as a protection against plague. Such vandalism as we now regard it has, I blush to record, been repeated within my own experience in secular buildings of historic

interest and beauty when these have been taken into use as factories ! Quite recently the question has been raised whether the law relating to annual limewashing of walls and ceilings of factories must be enforced when these have been decorated with colour schemes, and with subjects intended for the uplift of the workers and the brightening of factory life. Another, but more homely, example of the difficulties which beset the path of the legislator and the administrator when the law proceeds from the general to the particular is that of the ordinary dressmaker's workroom. Workrooms of this kind, whether the trade be dressmaker, milliner, or any other, were generally situated (and are so frequently at present) in a dwelling house, or premises which had been previously so occupied. The walls of such rooms were usually papered. So long as the premises were " workshops " the law was complied with if the wall-paper was clean and in good repair, but when by the introduction of a power-driven sewing machine or cutting machine the premises were transformed technically into a factory annual limewashing became obligatory. The factory in such cases might be " kept in a cleanly state," and, moreover, the rooms would look bright and attractive. Must then the occupier strip and limewash them ? Or should the inspector turn the blind eye on them ?

My experience taught me to regard the floors as commonly of more importance than walls and ceilings in the matter of cleanliness. The neglect of the most elementary cleansing of floors and

of work benches and other things in general use as furniture or fittings was, I had almost said, universal. The constant war waged by the inspectorate against accumulated filth has had so much effect in the past twenty or thirty years that I doubt not that the present Staff, reading over old reports, smile and characterise as journalistic our restrained descriptions! Improvement has been effected in most cases by persuasion and advice. The most effective plan was to give a strictly limited time for the removal of dirt and waste material, for the necessary scraping, sweeping and washing, and to return when it expired to see the result. In most cases the work of cleansing was carried out without recourse to prosecution. But when all is said and done enforcement of the law depends on the courts, and the magistrate's support in a matter of opinion is not easily secured. A woman inspector was, to a certain extent, handicapped in arguing that a factory was not in a cleanly state, being thought to have the bias of her sex in favour of much cleaning! It has often been found difficult to convince a bench of Justices of the Peace that in prosecuting an obdurate employer one was not merely "fussy" or thirsting for an orgy of spring cleaning at his expense. Yet had I been able to conduct their worships to see the factory in its normal state, their opinion would have been expressed in words more forcible than I could hope to use and the maximum penalty would have been secured. It was some consolation when a case of the kind was dismissed to reflect

that at least the works had benefited by the cleaning which had taken place. But the Department did not regard very favourably prosecutions that failed, and I soon found it was better to exercise my powers of persuasion, to allow a time limit for spring cleaning and, after giving specific advice of a domestic character, to revisit. Both I and my colleagues recorded many a triumph of this nature, and we were able not infrequently to share the pleasure of the occupier and the workers in the recovery of light and brightness in the works. Certainly a higher standard of cleanliness has been normally adopted in factories and workshops. Even in those early days the improvement began soon to manifest itself, and brooms and mops and pails were often found being hastily pressed into action as one moved from one room of a factory into another. There is still need, however, for strict enforcement of cleanliness, and for the education of occupiers (especially of the smaller workshops and factories) in this matter, and I would add even of magistrates. The best means of education in these and kindred matters is afforded by the example set by well-conducted factories. Inspectors have this advantage and know what is practicable by seeing the high standard of cleanliness maintained even in dirty trades by intelligent attention to details, but for those who have not such opportunities this lesson must perhaps be learnt by the insertion in fresh legislation of such detailed provisions in the sanitary clauses as shall admit of no misunderstanding of what is required.

If the words of the Factory Act respecting cleanliness have been found in practice to be vague and capable of very various interpretations so have also the general provisions requiring sufficient air space, and ventilation and a "reasonable temperature." As regards the latter I remember the question being debated in court for many hours as to whether forty-nine degrees or sixty degrees should be considered a reasonable temperature for a workroom where women sat sewing. I called three expert witnesses and the employer called three, and the two sides gave absolutely contrary evidence the one against the other! No wonder the puzzled magistrates dismissed the case. Every winter complaints poured in from women and girls, imploring a visit to the factory or workshop to see that they were "perished with cold." It was pathetic to find girls sitting wrapped in coats or shawls with pinched faces and blue fingers, struggling to do their work. Even smart West-end dressmakers were cruel enough to forbid the lighting of fire or stove on bitterly cold days. A typical letter ran: "Dear Miss, can anything be done for us sewing machinists to get a little warmth. Many of us have no parents or homes of our own, so we are not so very well fed and warmed. We don't want anything unreasonable, only just to be warm enough to work." Often the method adopted to warm the room was to light the gas and keep it burning all day with all windows and ventilators shut. The stuffiness of a crowded workroom so warmed may be imagined, and to put a stop to such

practices was not easy. To successfully prosecute it was necessary to embark on the legal argument that this means of heating interfered with the purity of the air, and scientific evidence was not always convincing. Step by step these and many other points have been raised, examined and tested in the courts. A too high temperature is as trying as intense cold, and much suffering I found to be caused by processes which necessitated great heat. The spinning rooms in cotton mills were examples of this, as were also the drying rooms in laundries, where the women were at work hanging up the wet clothes in a temperature of over one hundred degrees. Lace "dressing" rooms where net on frames was stiffened were terrible places to work in. In most cases of the kind better methods have been introduced, and the workers no longer are exposed to the intolerable conditions of former days.

Of the disgusting conditions which we women inspectors found to be common in regard to sanitary accommodation it is impossible to write. Some indication of the appalling lack of the most elementary sanitation, or decency even, in large cotton mills and other works of importance may be gathered from the reports published in the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories. To find these things out, to fight and struggle against the apathy of sanitary authorities and the determination of employers to oppose expenditure on reforms, was the most distasteful and troublesome of all our tasks, but it was also one of the most

urgent and the most remarkable in its successful results. The co-operation of factory inspectors and the local sanitary authority is essential in this matter, but it is being increasingly recognised that only if a uniformly high standard is enforceable in factories throughout the country can a satisfactory result be secured. In this respect amendment of the Factory Act is proposed in the recently published Factories Bill.

CHAPTER IV

INDUSTRIAL DISEASE

Medical inspectors—Team work—Dangerous trades—Women help women—Lucifer matches—Phosphorus poisoning—Anthrax—Government disinfection—Lesser ills—Injury from heavy weight lifting.

OF the wonderful achievements in the reduction of the incidence of industrial diseases which have marked the periods reviewed in this book it is unnecessary to write in detail. The record of progress in this respect forms one of the most thrilling chapters in the history of preventive medicine, and the facts are to be found in the published reports of the medical inspectors and in numerous scientific works. The great campaign against industrial disease during which I am proud to have served among the rank and file of the Home Office army may be said to have opened (after the preliminary skirmish of the first tentative special rules for dangerous trades in 1892) with the Factory Act of 1895.[1] Notification to the Home Office by medical practitioners of cases of industrial poisoning was first made compulsory by the Factory Act of 1895 (Section 29), and special rules for safeguarding the workers in

[1] Thirty-two codes of special Regulations for Dangerous Trades are now in force, affecting 156,725 works.

lead and other poisonous materials were inaugurated or strengthened under the wider powers provided. A Departmental Committee on Dangerous Trades sat from 1895 to 1899, and the first woman factory inspector, Miss Abraham, was a member. In 1896 the Factory Department was placed under the direction of a medical man, Dr. (now Sir Arthur) Whitelegge, as Chief Inspector of Factories, and in 1898 the first Medical Inspector of Factories, Dr. (now Sir Thomas) Legge, was appointed. From that time onwards, under their direction, the study of industrial disease and its prevention was scientifically pursued with patient persistence, and the result is known to all the world.

One of the chief attractions of the Civil Service is its system of team work. The share of the general body of lay inspectors in the great enterprise of promoting industrial health which is conducted by their medical colleagues, is a striking illustration of this system. We women inspectors were keen to take our part and received every encouragement to do so. I have already mentioned that Miss Abraham served on the Dangerous Trades Committee. We all helped to enforce the special rules which affected women in dangerous trades, and carried out investigations of cases of illness among women and girls. The particularly serious effect which lead has upon the health of women and girls made all the numerous industries and processes in which this substance is used in one or other of its forms a fruitful field for our inspection and

inquiry. In industries such as pottery manufacture the use and effects of lead were already known; in others they were unsuspected. I recall—and my experience was repeated in the case of my women colleagues—many instances in which cases of serious illness came to light only through conversations with women in the factories and subsequent visits to the homes. Similarly the use of mercury, of arsenic, and other poisonous or injurious substances was detected. Information of obscure illness reported to the medical inspectors set in motion the steps necessary for prevention and cure. In such ways the prevalence of serious cases of unreported industrial diseases was first discovered. Women and girls were naturally very reticent about their symptoms, and would shrink from volunteering any information about them to a man. A woman moving about them, asking questions and giving opportunities for confidential answers, was a very different matter. As there were in those days few women doctors practising among the workers and no welfare supervisors, the woman factory inspector filled a great need. Things are very different now. Women and girls have more access to women who are qualified to help them. It would be rash, however, to assume that there is therefore no longer need for women inspectors to be readily available for the inspection of factories and workshops where women are employed. The inspector by virtue of her office has means of acquiring information and giving advice which appertains to no other functionary,

and women in industry have, I think, a right to expect that their work-places shall be visited periodically by a woman inspector.

Only by personal contact of an inspector with workers individually can a Government Department be kept informed of the extent to which injury is caused in certain trades, or be made acquainted with hitherto unsuspected risks to health or life, in face of the constantly changing methods of manufacture and the introduction of new and little known materials. We saw this many times in the old days, we saw it again even more strikingly during the war when chemicals, whose use in small quantities had given no reason for alarm, suddenly being in great demand for certain types of munitions gave rise to serious illness and caused many deaths. The growing needs of the Factory Department have been met by the appointment of more medical inspectors, and by the appointment of experts in other branches of science, as electrical inspectors and engineering inspectors, and probably the need for further specialised inspectors will increase. There will, however, always be a need for the inspector as such—that is to say, for men and for women who are trained and experienced observers, whose function it is to move about daily in and out among the factories noting, comparing, watching, and recording, and keeping in close touch with the employers and with the workers. These may not receive or even deserve the kudos, or achieve the reputation, of the specialised officers, but they will be the eyes and ears of the Department,

and as such form a necessary link between it and the scientific experts, being an essential part of the team by which a Government Department does its work. I claim that *inspection* is a skilled occupation with its own standards, necessitating equally with other professions its specialised training and its peculiar qualifications. We want more medical inspectors of factories, both men and women, not in place of but in addition to the general inspectors.

The mere mention of a few of the inquiries I have made in dangerous trades and into cases of industrial disease would occupy too much space. I will only, by way of example, mention two instances—the lucifer match trade and the disease of anthrax as it affects industrial workers.

We have become so accustomed to the use of harmless lucifer matches that we are apt to forget that not so many years ago the manufacture of matches here in England caused untold misery and disease to men and women engaged in it. The history of the change effected in this industry by legislation should put fresh heart into every social reformer. It is worthy of a prominent place in the annals of the Home Office. I can only touch on it here briefly in so far as it lies within my personal reminiscences.

When first I was introduced to lucifer match factories in 1897, I thought those it was my lot to inspect were the most miserable places I had ever seen. Dreary, dirty, dark, dilapidated sheds and buildings filled with smoke and fume. The

workers of both sexes of the poorest and most down-trodden appearance. At that time three times as many women as men were employed in the industry and a large proportion of these were girls under eighteen years of age. The dipping of the heads of the wooden splints into the phosphorus mixture was done by adults, the boxing was the work of young girls. These were for the most part unkempt rough young hooligans. The wages were miserably low. The piece-work rate for boxing was one shilling for twelve gross of boxes. If a box fired in the process of filling it did not count. The work was so rapid that firing was constant. I have a vivid picture in my mind of the awkward scramble of arms and hands of a crowd of girls working at feverish speed to cram the handfuls of matches into boxes which, when overfull, flamed up and were cast upon the floor, the fume and smoke rising into one's nostrils. Why such continual destruction of matches was allowed to pass as if it were an inevitable part of the process I do not know, but it was quite in accord with the ugly and ineffective general methods of the business. That the mixture spread upon a hot plate into which the matches were dipped contained the poisonous white or yellow phosphorus I knew, but of its actual effects on the health of the workers I had yet to learn through painful meetings with its victims. The lucifer match maker's disease, phosphorus necrosis, was popularly known as " phossy jaw " on account of its causing the inflammation and decay of the jaw bone. This was not

the only effect of the disease, but its most characteristic and terrible manifestation. Phosphorus necrosis was brought about by the inhalation of fumes from white or yellow phosphorus. The greatest risk was incurred by persons employed in mixing the ingredients of the paste and dipping the heads of the wooden splints into the paste. All, however, including the box fillers, were exposed more or less to the fumes. The danger existed wherever ordinary "strike-anywhere" matches were made. "Safety matches," which ignited only when struck on the box, were made with the non-fuming red or amorphous phosphorus and were quite harmless to the workers, but these were not in much demand. The dangers to which the manufacture of the ordinary lucifer matches exposed the workers had long been recognised. Children were prohibited from "dipping" by the Factory Act of 1878, and women and young persons were forbidden to take meals in any part of a match factory where phosphorus was used. In 1892 special rules were applied to making of matches where white or yellow phosphorus was used. The precautions prescribed by these rules did something to diminish the danger, but were insufficient and were not well observed. As they were objected to by the manufacturers the matter was referred to arbitration in 1899, and resulted in amendments which strengthened the precautions required to be taken.

The investigation in which I took my part in 1898 arose out of well-founded suspicion that cases

of poisoning were being " hushed up." This proved to be the case. In a certain town, by following up hints thrown out by frightened girls, I dug out cases of men and women hidden away in the slums —piteous cases they were. Some of the sufferers had toothless gums. One woman had completely lost the lower jaw, a young girl in an earlier stage of the disease was constantly in great pain while the suppurating jaw bone was gradually decaying. The difficulty of taking food, and the prolonged suffering and the resulting disfigurement made the disease a particularly distressing one. No compensation could at that time be claimed for disablement due to industrial disease, and while in the more recent cases some meagre relief (I will not call it hush money !) was paid by the employer, the older sufferers had not received any assistance. The Home Office immediately took further steps. Scientific experts were called in, and with the medical officers of the Factory Department, made an exhaustive study of the disease and of the means necessary for safeguarding the workers. In addition to the legal enforcement of structural arrangements for removing fumes and securing personal cleanliness, a system of medical examination and dental care was prescribed. The latter because the poisonous fumes found entrance through decayed teeth. These very stringent rules had the effect of squeezing out some of the worst factories which could not afford to conform and of greatly improving not only the premises but the methods of the larger firms. As has so often proved to be the case,

while handling the work, or a pimple on the cheek or neck unwittingly scratched by the worker's fingers, or the broken skin of a cut or prick would afford a means of its entrance. Here again the Home Office, by special rules and regulations imposed on the trades in which the chief danger lay, and by a careful inquiry through the factory inspector of every case which occurred, was able step by step to diminish the risk of infection. In the published reports of Sir Thomas Legge,[1] the expert on the subject, the history of the disease, its prevention and treating can be studied. The culmination of this campaign against the disease was the Anthrax Prevention Act of 1919, under which the Home Office obtained power to provide for the disinfection of certain infected materials on their arrival in this country. A Government disinfecting station has been established in Liverpool[2] and the East Indian goat hair and Egyptian wool and hair are rendered innocuous before they are allowed to enter the factories. More remains to be done by extending these precautions to other infected material, and better still by securing through international agreement the disinfection of all suspect material in the country of its origin before it leaves the port. If any who influence policy in

1 "The Milroy Lectures on Industrial Anthrax, 1905," by T. M. Legge, M.D. "Annual Reports Chief Inspector of Factories." "Report on incidence of Anthrax in the manipulation of Horsehair and Bristles," by T. M. Legge, M.D., 1906.

2 "Prevention of Anthrax among Industrial Workers. Memorandum on the Disinfecting Station for disinfection of wool and hair, 1921." H.M. Stationery Office.

Government regulation of the use of a poisonous material strictly enforced led to experiments by manufacturers and the final adoption of improved processes and harmless substitutes. By gradual steps the way was prepared without injury to trade or to employment—nay, rather with increase in both—to the prohibition by Act of Parliament of the use of the poisonous substance. The same dangers to health which had troubled us here had been present to an even greater degree in foreign countries. An international conference at Berne in 1905–6 had resulted in an agreement to prohibit the use of white phosphorus. The White Phosphorus Matches Prohibition Act, 1908, came into force here in January, 1910, and henceforth it became illegal to make, import, or sell such matches.

My chief experience of industrial anthrax came at a rather later date, when with the further development of the women's branch of the inspectorate the duty of following up the medical practitioner's notice of a case of poisoning among his women patients was entrusted to the woman inspector. Industrial anthrax, unlike phosphorus necrosis, was sudden in its onset and rapid in its progress, and unless treatment was immediately sought its fatal termination was almost inevitable. Although the cases were comparatively few in number, yet each was a tragedy. It fell to my lot to investigate personally many such. Workers in woollen mills, in brush factories, in hide and skin warehouses, were exposed to the infection from anthrax bacteria. Such infection might be present in dust inhaled

while handling the work, or a pimple on the cheek or neck unwittingly scratched by the worker's fingers, or the broken skin of a cut or prick would afford a means of its entrance. Here again the Home Office, by special rules and regulations imposed on the trades in which the chief danger lay, and by a careful inquiry through the factory inspector of every case which occurred, was able step by step to diminish the risk of infection. In the published reports of Sir Thomas Legge,[1] the expert on the subject, the history of the disease, its prevention and treating can be studied. The culmination of this campaign against the disease was the Anthrax Prevention Act of 1919, under which the Home Office obtained power to provide for the disinfection of certain infected materials on their arrival in this country. A Government disinfecting station has been established in Liverpool[2] and the East Indian goat hair and Egyptian wool and hair are rendered innocuous before they are allowed to enter the factories. More remains to be done by extending these precautions to other infected material, and better still by securing through international agreement the disinfection of all suspect material in the country of its origin before it leaves the port. If any who influence policy in

[1] "The Milroy Lectures on Industrial Anthrax, 1905," by T. M. Legge, M.D. "Annual Reports Chief Inspector of Factories." "Report on incidence of Anthrax in the manipulation of Horsehair and Bristles," by T. M. Legge, M.D., 1906.

[2] "Prevention of Anthrax among Industrial Workers. Memorandum on the Disinfecting Station for disinfection of wool and hair, 1921." H.M. Stationery Office.

these matters are not convinced of the need of stringent measures to stamp out a disease so little affecting the general public as anthrax, I am brutal enough to suggest that he should share the inspector's experience of making the acquaintance of even one sufferer at the moment when infection has become known, or attend an inquiry at the victim's decease.

In 1901 and 1902 I made a special investigation into conditions under which women and girls were employed in tin plate works in South Wales. Among many other matters needing reform was one which from that time onwards occupied my attention closely in many different industries. This was the strain imposed on girls and women by lifting and carrying heavy weights. In an article on tin plate works that I contributed in 1902 to Sir Thomas Oliver's book on "Dangerous Trades," after describing the process of cleaning the tin sheets as carried on in the "tin-house" by young girls, I wrote, "A most objectionable feature of the employment of young girls in the tin-house is the carrying of heavy loads. As this is not essential to the work and could be done by boy or girl or man with a specially constructed truck or trolly it is greatly to be deplored. . . . To prevent constant journeys and secure more time for wage-earning . . . the girls carry as much at a time as they possibly can, carrying loads men hesitate to lift. These loads carried by slight girls of thirteen or fourteen weighed from forty pounds to one hundred and eleven pounds. Injuries known

and unknown are done by this unnecessary use of young girls as 'beasts of burden.'"

A few instances out of very many collected during my inspections may suffice to show how much needed is some legal restriction on the lifting and carrying of weights. In the "Manchester warehouses," as they are called, where the cotton cloth straight from the looms is brought to be folded and packed into bales, women and girls were employed to lift and carry the pieces of cloth. They went backwards and forwards considerable distances with the load of cloth on their shoulders. The usual weight of these pieces is from fifty pounds to seventy pounds; in some cases eighty to one hundred pounds were carried. To many of the workers this work proved to be a heavy strain and it was a source of constant grievance, for which, however, there was no legal remedy. All I could do was to make suggestions to the management. In one case where I was met with the not unusual retort that it was "the women's own fault, no one asked them to carry so much," I found that as much as seventy pounds weight of cloth was being laid on the shoulders of women waiting in a queue to receive it from the hands of men in charge of the chutes which delivered the bales from the upper floors. These were not a robust type of women such as are employed in labouring work in rural districts, but slightly built city and slum dwellers, and slips of undeveloped girls. Again in glass factories in Sunderland I found pairs of women carrying large iron trays piled up with glass dishes, cumbersome and

difficult to hold, weighing 112 to 120 pounds. In weaving sheds severe injury was caused to women by lifting heavy weights attached to the looms.

Other industries in which the carrying of heavy loads was particularly trying were brick works, aerated water works, fruit preserving, and potteries. Some legal restrictions on this injurious practice were imposed by Home Office Orders in fruit-preserving works. These prohibited young persons being employed to lift and carry any weight so heavy as to be likely to cause them injury. In potteries a medical certificate is required before a young person may lift or carry heavy weights. During the war the women in engineering works, and particularly in making shells, when taking the place of men, were required to do heavy work and an attempt was made to limit the load to be lifted by a woman unaided to sixty pounds. It is, however, not practicable to fix any weight as a maximum suitable to all circumstances. An experiment has been recently made in the woollen and worsted trades by fixing a maximum load agreed on between the workers and employers associations for men, women and young persons. This was included in an Order issued by the Home Office in July, 1925, but the weight fixed has yet to be tested by experience. When the subject of weight lifting received the careful attention of the Health of Munition Workers Committee[1]

[1] "Health of Munition Workers Committee Final Report," paragraphs 418 to 443.

in 1915, we decided that all that could properly be done was to take all practical measures to ensure that no person shall be required to lift or carry any weight so heavy as to be likely to cause injury to him or her. Similar views had been expressed by the Departmental Committee on Accidents, 1911 (see Report p. 33). There is abundant evidence that men need protection in this matter as well as women and are not able to secure it sufficiently through voluntary agreements between the trade unions and the association of employers. The annual reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories from 1909 to 1915 (to go back no further) contain ample information as to the need for legislation to afford relief to workers in general in this matter.[1] A simple statutory requirement would stimulate the provisions of labour-saving devices to the advantage of all concerned, employers as well as employed.

[1] See also Annual Report 1925.

CHAPTER V

HOURS OF WORK

The legal day—Night work—Midnight raids—Industrial slavery—Tracking offenders—Tailors—Dressmakers—Unbroken spells of work—Intervals.

IT is high time that this record dealt with the most important part of a factory inspector's work, namely, the enforcement of the regulations restricting the hours of employment of women and young persons, to which some reference has as yet only been made incidentally. In pre-war days the inspector had to engage in much "detective" work in order to put a check on the tendency in times of pressure to employ women and young persons in excess of the very generous legal limit. Meal times, too, were invaded by the demands of the unscrupulous employer to a degree which now is almost incredible. In war emergency work all restrictions at first were threatened with overthrow, but wiser counsel prevailed, and there emerged a saner view of the limitations which should be set to organised toil. The hours of labour question pervaded the whole of my official life, and cannot be assigned to one period more than another; but I set down in this chapter what I have to say on the subject. The

most striking change I have seen during the past 30 years has been in regard to the shortening of factory hours both for men and women. This has not been due, as have so many other changes in industrial conditions, to legislation. It has been rather a change in custom, and the reduction in hours of labour has been effected by voluntary arrangement. The only regulation in the Factory Act, 1901, respecting hours of work concerns women and young persons, and provides for a normal week of 60 hours (55½ in textile factories). The law in this matter has remained unchanged for 50 years, but in practice, gradually and quietly, a week of 48 hours has become common, and the present Factory Act regulations as to hours are quite out of date. In all the principal men's trades a week of 48 hours or less has been secured by voluntary agreement. The law relating to women and young persons needs amendment in bringing it into accord with public opinion and modern practice. Women are now impatient of restrictions unless these are shared by men, but what men have secured for themselves by voluntary agreement women, less strongly organised, may well be content to have secured to them by law. The history of factory legislation shows that men have benefited again and again by laws passed for the protection of women and young persons.

Previous to the war the hours of work were undoubtedly excessive. I have already mentioned the unreasonably long hours worked by women in laundries before these were brought under the

Factory Act in 1895—the restriction then imposed, wide as the latitude allowed was, marked the first step in progress which came within my own experience. The second, secured by the same Act, was the prohibition of overtime for young persons under 18. For women overtime in certain industries continued to be legal up to 66 hours in the week—68 hours in laundries. Notwithstanding the generous allowance under the Factory Act illegal employment much in excess of it was common. Constant vigilance on the inspector's part was necessary to prevent the employment of women and girls before and after the legal period and during meal times. Night employment was not allowed for women and young persons, but we often found them at work. Systematic inspecting after legal hours at night was part of the ordinary routine. This overtime visiting often made a serious addition to the day's work! It was not possible, although, no doubt allowable, to take time off during part of the day in anticipation of night inspection when visiting a town for two or three days only. Not infrequently the hours on duty would extend from 9 a.m. to past midnight to meet the urgent need for investigating complaints. Information would come from all kinds of sources during a short visit to a town. Sometimes the driver of the cab or hotel omnibus would hurriedly whisper a request: "Go to so-and-so's factory between ten and eleven to-night. My daughter is working overtime night after night." Or a working man in the street or in a tram would,

after inquiry, "Are you the Government lady?" drop a hint on behalf of wife or daughter. Written complaints were very numerous, and generally followed after a visit to a neighbourhood, particularly if notice of a successful prosecution had appeared in the Press. These communications were often strangely worded and the work-place was not always clearly indicated, and some skill and patience was necessary at times to find the place and effect an entrance. These complaints, whether anonymous or not, were always investigated, and in nearly every case proved to be fully justified. Some of the worst cases of illegal employment I have known were discovered through an anonymous complaint. Now and again a very determined offender, "once caught twice shy," would employ scouts to watch the railway station at night to give warning of the arrival of anyone resembling a factory inspector, and many were the devices we employed to outwit such! On one occasion, after an absence of some weeks from a small town in the Midlands where I knew the railway station was watched, I arrived after dark by road from a distance, hurried into an hotel and engaged a room from whence I had a view of the factory windows. Watch was kept on the lighted windows until after ten o'clock, when I crossed the street and entered an unguarded door as someone came out. I was found half an hour later by the astonished employer (who had been hastily fetched from his house) among the workgirls, taking their names and addresses in preparation for

the inevitable prosecution. It is remarkable, I think, that although during a period of 15 years at least I visited at all hours of the night in the slums and suburbs of cities and in provincial towns in almost every part of England and Wales I never was interfered with or molested. Policemen gave me kindly warning in Whitechapel and Stepney (then very unpleasant localities) and sometimes stood by unobtrusively in case of need. Sometimes a constable would assist by kicking with regulation boots on a door on which my own knocks had been futile, after I had allayed his suspicions of my own strange movements by the magic words " factory inspector."

In the early days—for five years or so—I went alone, but when more women were appointed one or more junior members of the staff generally accompanied me for training and to assist as scouts. Sometimes this was very useful, as if a factory or workshop had more than one exit a watch could be kept at the side doors while entrance was sought at the main gate. On one occasion, while two of my young colleagues watched the front of a theatrical costumier's in Covent Garden I managed to slip in at the back as a girl came out, and running quickly up the stairs met the manager flying down, waving his hands and crying out excitedly : " Fly ! fly ! The inspectors are here ! " In the general scrimmage he had failed to see that I was not one of the employees, and had hoped to clear the house before the other inspectors, who had been seen at the front door, had entered. Later on still, when

we women inspectors were assigned to work with the men inspectors in certain districts, we joined with them in night raids in order to cope with the practice adopted by tailors' workshops of hiding the women and girls in bedrooms if the inspectors were about. It was an eerie business as I experienced it in Manchester and Leeds, where, in small dismal streets tailors, mostly Jews, worked in their own houses as outworkers for big firms. On Thursday nights it was their custom to work the whole night through to finish garments to take to shop on Fridays. As far as adult men were concerned there was no law to prevent work being continued at all hours. (I often wished for their sake that there were, for the men were wretchedly overworked and sweated.) Women and girls usually worked with the men. Overtime for the women was only permitted until 10 p.m. and was prohibited for young persons under 18. At 2 a.m. I and one of my young women colleagues would meet two or three men inspectors at some prearranged street corner and proceed to "raid" the tailors' houses. It was not pleasant to be so suspicious and to be deaf to all assurances that no woman was employed, and to entreaties (none the less pathetic because false), not to disturb the night rest of wife or invalid sister by entering a bedroom. But experience proved how necessary such inroads were. I have found two girls disguised as a bolster behind a woman in bed, all fully dressed, working aprons and thimbles complete. I have even seen a bright, laughing, girlish face peeping out from under

a sheet drawn over a still, recumbent figure laid on a bed in a closed room from which I should have withdrawn abashed at having penetrated into the presence of the dead had I not, greatly daring, on a sudden intuition raised a corner of the covering and peeped in.

The women and girls thus concealed were glad to be discovered, and their employers did not resent being found out, but seemed to regard it as a game in which sometimes we and sometimes they won. Yet what a tragedy of economic pressure lies behind the facts of every-day experience of pre-war factory inspection! If, as seems to be the case, these things do not happen now, must we not take care that by no turn of the industrial wheel do they ever return? It was not by any means only the poor oppressed small employer who overworked his employees, although it was certainly he who was the most persistent offender. Well-known fashionable dressmakers would, as a matter of course, risk the inspector's visit night after night in the season, and appear in court and pay up without troubling much about it, regarding the episode as an inevitable accompaniment of the London season. Occasionally even big firms (whose products were well known throughout the country) would transgress by keeping women and young persons far beyond the already too long legal hours. Thus a firm of printers, in order to get out posters for an exhibition, kept women working 30 hours at a stretch. I found them after midnight in the factory, some lying wrapped in

their coats on the floor between the machines at which others were working.

But it was in the laundries that the worst examples of long hours were commonly found. The legal period allowed in them was longer than permitted elsewhere, and this was frequently exceeded. The industry was in process of organising itself, and prosecutions of offenders helped to accelerate the improvement which gradually has taken place. It was not only the flagrant breaches of the Act which imposed a serious strain on the women and girls, whether in factories and workshops or in laundries. We had abundant evidence that the legal period when continually worked was unreasonably long. If anyone doubts that 12½ hours' work, broken only by two meal pauses, one of an hour and another of half an hour, is a great strain on endurance let him try it and persevere for at least a week! When one considers the length of the day and the miserable wages women and girls earned, it was to me a perpetual marvel with what courage and cheerfulness they bore it. It is my opinion that the strain became more intolerable under modern methods of manufacture; as the work became more sectional interest in it diminished and the hours on monotonous work dragged; as discipline and supervision of tasks developed "driving" became general, and the go-as-you-please, which afforded relief at times when the need was felt, gave place to "speeding up" and "hustle." A volume might be filled with instances in support of this theory, but the mention of it must suffice here.

Sometimes when our help was earnestly entreated by the victims of excessive hours of work we found ourselves powerless to intervene because the employment was not covered by the Factory Act, or by law at all. Such was employment in clerical work in offices. There for years the girls have suffered from unrestricted hours in times of pressure, and still have no legal remedy. Or it was employment in shops after the premises were "closed for the service of customers." In one case of night work in a "closed" shop we did succeed in response to repeated appeals, but only after prolonged legal proceedings. After conviction by the police court magistrate, which I succeeded with difficulty in obtaining, the defendants appealed to the High Court but lost their case. This was the case of Fullers *v.* Squire (1901 2 K.B. 209), in which the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Alverstone, held that the process of packing sweetmeats in cardboard boxes and hampers with fancy ribbons and arranging the former both inside and outside so as to make them attractive to the public is within the words "adapting for sale" (and therefore under the Factory Act) where the process is carried on in a retail shop after the ordinary shop hours. The defendants were well-known makers and retailers of high-class sweets, and at Christmas time the shop assistants would be kept hard at work at night preparing the boxes of chocolates ordered by customers during the day. These were no ordinary packages of sweets but costly and beautiful presents, the chocolates tastefully arranged

within and the box decorated with wide silk ribbons tied in wonderful bows. By a successful raid in Regent Street after midnight I succeeded in gaining admission to the closed and curtained shop, and took evidence from the smart but wearied young ladies whose pleasure at being caught was very evident! In court I argued at length that the process was "adapting for sale of an article," *i.e.*, a bonbon box, and therefore under the Factory Act. Counsel on the other side argued that it was merely putting up sweets as a grocer might put them up in a paper bag for the customer's convenience after sale was completed. To refute my opponent's argument I produced a box (which I had purchased for the purpose), beautiful with its gorgeous and skilfully tied bow. The appearance of this brilliant object in the drab police court and later in the Court of King's Bench, where it was admiringly handled by His Majesty's judges, caused no little amusement and much enlivened the proceedings. I think I afterwards regaled myself and a few select colleagues with the contents of the famous "exhibit," as the lawyers termed it, in celebration of our victory. The moral, however, of the story is that the hours of employment need to be regulated in shops as well as in factories, and this I have referred to later on in Chapter XIII.

That women did not always at first appreciate the efforts made to afford them the protection the Factory Act provided is illustrated by an incident which occurred in a West Country town

where the dominant industry was the manufacture of shirts and collars. The practice had grown to large dimensions of giving out work at the end of the day for the factory workers to take to do at home. This was an evasion of the regulation as to hours of work and, beside being a tax on the girls' health, its effect was to lower the piece work rate—there was no Trade Board in those days to fix a minimum and this was a notoriously sweated industry. I visited the town accompanied by a younger colleague, and after watching the works to see the girls out carrying parcels of work, we called at the workers' houses to find them at work—a necessary proceeding, of course, to obtain evidence for prosecution. Caution had failed to have effect and the only way to stamp out the practice was to make an example of some of the principal firms. As we went about the streets we became aware that by degrees a crowd of girls was collecting and following us, waiting outside when we entered a house. At first we ignored them, but when in a larger thoroughfare, our following having gained adherents from some noisy youths, we were assailed by boos and jeers, I turned and faced them. Very quietly they listened while I first twitted them about childish behaviour and then discoursed on the reasons underlying Factory Acts, and the benefit for workers as a whole of the particular regulation we were then seeking to enforce. Cheers greeted the conclusion of my "sermon," and the crowd melted away. Then, as always, any appeal to factory girls to look not

to their own immediate advantage but to the welfare of other workers found a ready acceptance. Much good service has been done by spreading among women workers a knowledge of the laws affecting their industrial life. In early days when there was no one else to do it we women inspectors were allowed by the Department to give lectures on the Factory Acts to girls' clubs and social workers. I always found a keen interest taken in the subject by my audience when I could find time to accept invitations to speak. Later this educational work has been taken over, and admirably carried on, by the Young Women's Christian Association and other women's organisations.

A very great grievance among women and girls was the continuous spell of five hours' work in the factory without a break, as required by the Factory Act. The arrangement of the day's employment was often as follows: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.; dinner one to two o'clock; and work again from two till seven. This was adopted in well-disciplined factories with the object of avoiding any unnecessary loss of time in pausing for refreshment and resuming work. The two long shifts imposed a severe strain on the workers in any case, but particularly, I think, where the work was monotonous and wearisome. More enlightened employers broke the morning shift by a ten or even seven minutes' break during which some light refreshment was served; this to women who had left home early with little or no breakfast was a priceless boon, and of course the work did not suffer but rather

was improved both in quality and quantity by the stimulating effect of rest and food. The same relief was given in the afternoon, and everyone knows what a cup of tea at four o'clock means ! Again and again I have preached to sceptical employers the gospel of breaks and pauses in the five hours' spells and, having seemingly made little impression, found at a revisit that a trial had been made of the suggestion, resulting in its adoption throughout the factory. Undoubtedly a five hours' spell of intensive work under factory conditions is too long. A four and a half hours' spell is now legal in textile factories as against the five hours of non-textile factories, but it is, I think, doubtful whether the difference of half an hour in the length of the continuous spell is sufficient to prevent the gradual diminishing of vigour and efficiency. There is something to be said for making the law uniform in this matter so that four and a half hours' continuous spell would be the maximum permissible, but the employer having an eye to maintaining production, as well as possessing a fellow-feeling for his employees, would still probably prefer to give a few minutes' interval during that spell. The advantages of frequent short intervals, particularly where the labour is heavy or monotonous, has been abundantly proved.

The subject of hours of labour is again touched on in the subsequent Chapter XI. on war conditions, and I have reserved the mention of the innovation of two-hour shifts until I come to speak of the Act of 1920 in its place (Chapter XIII.).

CHAPTER VI

WAGE PAYMENTS

1900–1903

The Truck Act, 1831—Wages paid in goods—Irish peasants—"Joyous adventures with the gombeen man"—Troublesome magistrates—High Court, Dublin—Squire *v.* Sweeney—English outworkers' plight—More High Court proceedings—Squire *v.* Midland Lace Co.

THE subject of wages, whether regarded from the standpoint of those who pay or those who receive, is of never-failing interest. Perhaps in no other transaction of daily life is character so tested as in that which includes on the one hand the fixing of terms and the payment of wages, and on the other their acceptance and receipt. Justice and greed, sincerity and dishonesty, fellowship and selfishness contend in this arena ceaselessly for the souls of men. We are accustomed to think of wages in the terms of £ s. d., and it rarely occurs to us that any other method of payment (except in so far as the board and lodging of a resident servant is part of wages) exists. Yet a great struggle has been maintained during many centuries in order to secure to the wage-earner the right (which seems so elementary to us) to be paid wages "in current coin of the realm and not otherwise." This charter of rights

of the labourer is embodied in the "Truck Acts." The very title has an old-world sound. "Truck," of course, is the same as barter, or exchange of one commodity for another. To "have no truck" with a man is to have no dealings with him. The Truck Acts in force at the present day date from 1831, but as far back as the reign of Edward IV an Act was passed to protect workers in the making of cloth from being compelled to take part of their wages in girdles and other articles. From that time onward twenty Acts of Parliament have succeeded one another in the attempt to prevent the employer exploiting his workers—whether weavers, or coal-miners, or employees in any other trade—by making them take as wages goods from the shop kept by him for that purpose and known in some districts as the "tommy shop." Readers of Disraeli's novels will recall how in "Sybil" the miners in conclave agreed that they were "tommied to death"—one of them expressed himself thus: "The question is what is wages? I say 'tayn't sugar, 'tayn't tea, 'tayn't bacon; I don't think 'tis candles, but of this I be sure, 'tayn't waistcoats —you know Juggins applied for his balance after his 'tommy book' was paid up and that incarnate nigger Diggs has made him take two waistcoats." Not elegant language, but highly expressive of the rankling sense of injustice! Even within the last twenty years it has been necessary for the Government to institute a campaign against such a system in Ireland and also in Somerset and Cornwall. In Ireland in a sparsely populated rural district the

peasants in their lonely cottages were found to be in the grip of "the gombeen man." Shopkeepers these were who gave out wool to be knitted into socks and stockings, or linen from Belfast firms to be embroidered, and who paid the women only in packets of tea. However urgent the need for money might be, tea—on which the shopkeeper made a large profit—was the only reward their labour could obtain. Bitter were the complaints which reached the Government on the peasants' behalf, but they themselves were so terrified of the employers that until a woman inspector was sent from London, to spend some weeks among them as a tourist and win their confidence by chatting in cabins and on the roadside, no sufficient evidence on which to base proceedings could be obtained.

In Somerset the same kind of wage-slavery was found to exist among the home-workers making gloves in the villages and in Cornwall among fishermen's wives knitting jerseys on the rocky shores of many a picturesque bay. Again, as in Ireland, the woman inspector as a tourist gained their confidence and again retribution overtook the guilty shopkeeper grown rich at the women's expense!

The adventures incidental to the tracking of the offence and the bringing of the offender to justice took place, so far as I was the instrument employed by my Department, in 1899 to 1902. The history is recorded in the annual reports of the Chief Inspectors of Factories for those years and in

reports of the Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts in 1908.[1] In a recent speech[2] the Permanent Deputy Under Secretary of State, referring to the early days of the lady inspectors' work as "the Arthurian period when they began seeking out abuses and redressing wrongs," added: "In cases arising out of the Truck Act Miss Squire's name began to appear in all the law courts. Those cases were always regarded as authoritative interpretations of the Truck Acts, and she had many joyous and gallant adventures in those early days, notably one with a 'gombeen man' in Ireland."

The scene of these adventures was the North-West of Ireland, mainly in the beautiful districts of the Rosses. Here a chain of a hundred small lakes set in a romantic region of bogland, fringed by mountains on the one hand and a rocky shore on the other, lured the well-to-do English fisherman to lead the simple life for a few months in the summer, and here the inhabitants eked out a precarious existence in scattered "town lands" and isolated cabins. The visitor from England, after a more or less stormy passage and a railway journey which makes the words "Emerald Isle" leap to the lips, alights at Fintown station, and immediately wonders why anyone, and he or she in particular, should be ejected from a friendly train in touch with the world of men and turned loose and left solitary in such a desolate spot! All around stretches wild

[1] Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, 1899, pages 275–277; 1900; pages 403-4. Report of the Truck Committee, 1908, Cd. 4442, Vol. I. pages 11-12; Vol. II. pages 79-89.

[2] *The Times*, February 2nd, 1926.

moorland and rock and the long, long track of road leading nowhere. But if, as in my own case, in a short time the belated car should appear with such a driver as it was my good fortune then to meet (and afterwards during many adventures to get to know) all feeling of lonely isolation vanishes and the stranger is welcomed into the heart of Ireland.

What form the "car" takes now I do not know—in the days of which I write it was an Irish "jaunting car," that most perfect of all vehicles for those who yield themselves to its special claims by the abandonment of a rigid position, and are content to half recline at ease and enjoy whatever form of swaying or jolting motion the lean horse, or the varying surface of the road, may communicate to the body of the passenger. Many hours of many a day I spent in company with my friend Driver Coffey and his car, in daylight and dark, in wind and rain, in cold and sunshine. On one occasion with relays of horses the drive lasted from four o'clock in the starlight of a frosty New Year's morning to seven o'clock in the storm clouds of its evening. Yet whatever other changes the passing hours might bring, there was no change in the unfailing courtesy and good nature of that perfect gentleman, my driver, whose appearance was that of a rat-catcher and whose brogue was so unadulterated that it only became intelligible by constant practice. Coffey had an inexhaustible fund of humour, and as a raconteur he was inimitable—he never shocked and never bored his passenger

as hour after hour we drove through that wild district of moor and lough, bounded by the soft mysterious mountain outlines with the fragments of rainbows appearing and disappearing before one could say lo here! or lo there! Can anyone who has visited Ireland and known its people separate the one from the other in thought—is not the land the key to the character of its inhabitants? What "Saxon" in Ireland does not feel a stranger in a strange land—and while confessing himself an alien, love both the land and its people.

The visitor of some twenty-five years ago arrived at his destination would find himself set down at the "hotel" in Dungloe—and marvel that so simple a dwelling should be so styled. In winter it was desolate indeed, but in summer some semblance of "the hospitality of the inn" was provided by the common meal shared by holiday fishermen, travelling Inland Revenue or other Government officials, and occasionally visiting "Resident Magistrates," in the evening at a long table in the bare and not over-clean coffee room. At these dinners the fresh caught trout formed the daily *pièce de résistance*, and good indeed it was. The one and only lady guest arriving "out of the blue" at the close of the fishing season in September, 1899, had an honoured place at the evening banquet and was conscious of a deep curiosity among the men assembled round the table as to "what the Dickens she did there." Did she fish? No. Did she paint? No, only drew a little. Yes, she had a camera—she was interested in Ireland and her people.—Not very

communicative this woman ! Avoiding politics but quite ready to chat on general topics, and a sympathetic listener regarding the incidents of the day's sport.

One by one as the days drew in these leisured fishermen, whose daily movements were regulated by the iron rule of mine host (who was manager of the fishing and incidentally clerk to the magistrates), went, and the lady was left alone to eat in solitude the meals, all now served in her private sitting-room. Gales raged and rain soaked the earth relentlessly, and still she lingered, and when she went she returned again and again regardless of the seasons. That hotel could scarcely be called weatherproof—when gales blew the peat fire in sitting or bed room smoked, the carpet rose in billows from the floor, the rain penetrated the walls —even the bed was damp ! For some considerable time the figment of the English lady tourist survived, supported by the explanation provided by the fishermen themselves out of their own imagination that she was an authoress in search of local colour for her new novel—this was a useful notion and it was no part of my business to refute it. My business was to find out everything for the Home Office, and disclose nothing. Here in this remote district a system had grown up which had little by little succeeded in placing these peasants in the power of a few men who had grown rich by " grinding the faces of the poor." The land was so poor that it did not yield enough for the support of the scattered peasantry, and there was no

industry to employ them. Every summer the men went to Scotland harvesting and all the year round the women knitted stockings. The yarn for knitting was supplied by the shopkeepers of Dungloe and other places throughout the district to women who tramped long distances bare-footed (as much as eighteen and twenty miles) from their isolated cabins to the shop to fetch the wool and return the completed socks. The shopkeepers were agents for hosiery firms and for big shops in Belfast and Londonderry. The amount the agents paid the women for the socks varied from 1s. 6d. a dozen pairs for the best heather mixture socks to 1s. 2d. a dozen for socks of a low quality.

The price was of course a terribly sweated wage (for the work was not accepted at all unless well executed). No money was paid by the agent, who handed to the workers in exchange for their labour goods from his shop, the goods being of whatever kind and quality suited his purpose best. Gradually shopkeepers here and there had succeeded in getting a whole district into their power by a system of barter, no money passed and all competition was eliminated as the customer was tied to her employer's shop. Was it surprising that the people remained poor and groaned while the shopkeeper prospered exceedingly and became arrogant. The Government was aware of this state of things and desired to enforce the Truck Acts in the district, but the people were so terrorised by the great men of the district in whose power they were, that no sufficient evidence could be obtained on

which to base prosecution. The shopkeepers were fully aware of their obligation to pay cash and if they thought they were being watched all transactions pertaining to the exchange of goods in payment of work done ceased for the time being, to be resumed as soon as no stranger was present. It was in order to obtain first-hand evidence of an eye-witness or, failing this, to secure evidence of the women themselves that the plan was, as mentioned above, devised by the Home Office, and carried through, of sending a woman inspector from headquarters as a "tourist" to obtain information by moving freely and unsuspected among the people. Nowadays suspicion would probably attach to a *woman* as to a man in such circumstances, but 20 to 30 years ago the employment of women as Government officials was so rare that very few even knew of their existence. The position in Donegal had been reconnoitred in the first instance by Dame Adelaide Anderson, who had received during a short visit enough information to justify the matter being pursued by careful inquiry, and I received my instructions to proceed to Ireland. It was an unknown country to me, and, while the broad outline was prescribed, I had full liberty to exercise my discretion and act as occasion seemed to demand.

Equipped with bicycle, camera (the use of which I fear I never mastered), sketch-book and sandwiches, I spent my days at first roaming the country, conversing by the roadside, on the moors, and in the cabins with women and girls, who were always

ceaselessly knitting and always welcomed and opened their hearts to the English lady. There was no doubt about it, the whole district seethed with discontent at the truck system and groaned under the tyranny of the "gombeen man." The facts were easily learnt. Again and again the same story would be poured out in the soft haunting brogue of old and young. "It is not money at all we get, but just tea and sugar, and the tea indeed is not good, it is not worth putting water on." Sometimes it would be a bonny girl knitting, while in charge on the bog of a lean starved looking beast, no human habitation in sight, who would tell her story with indignation. Sometimes a mother knitting, seated on a little stool by her peat fire (the grandmother crouched beside her, also knitting and smoking a short clay pipe), in the smoky atmosphere of the mud-floored cabin, who, having driven out the hens and invited the stranger, with the air of a duchess, to come in and be seated, would pour out the self-same story, the pathos of which none who have not heard it in its Irish setting can gauge. The visitor had always to partake of the aforesaid tea lest she should seem to be devoid of manners, but such tea, kept in perpetuity on the side of the fire in a basin half full of leaves, to which fresh water is now and then added, is an acquired taste. Potatoes in their skins from the black pot slung over the peat fire I could always relish, but "a taste of herring" grilled on a fork over the fire, without bread or salt or potatoes, is hard to appreciate in the middle

of the afternoon. It was noticeable that while etiquette quite evidently required that hens should be driven out when a visitor was received, the pig or the calf remained undisturbed. But it was not from the workers themselves only that information was forthcoming—the parish priests (of the Roman Catholic Church) in Dungloe and elsewhere were foremost in denunciation of " a system of tyranny which was ruining their flocks." Much precise detail, difficult to obtain from an ignorant peasantry, was thus obtained and a vivid picture of injustice was painted which made it well-nigh impossible to preserve one's official calm. The clergy, too, of the Church of Ireland (Protestant) knew equally with the priest the load which oppressed their people, and nobly, at some risk to themselves, did these stand by me and by members of their congregations later on, when the tide was set against the Government inspector and the priests found it expedient not to know me ! The charming men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, both in those early tourist days and afterwards, when they had officially to keep guard over me lest I should be kidnapped, were always helpful and full of knowledge and discretion and tact.

Piece by piece the bits of the puzzle began to fit into their places, and the picture to take shape, but only by slow degrees could these precise details as regards the various shopkeepers involved be cleared up, their very names and places of business only gradually emerged from careful personal inquiry in remote regions. A need for small articles

unlikely to arouse suspicion took the lady tourist into queer little general shops "by accident," at the very moment when it was crowded with women and girls carrying socks, and when packets of tea and sugar ready on the counters were exchanged for the socks by the salesman.[1] This was a happy combination of luck and design which could not be repeated more than once, for suspicion was gradually growing and began to change into certainty that "the Government was in it." Therefore, having obtained some first hand evidence, I let it be known that "some further steps might be taken," and returned to headquarters.

A few very busy weeks in England and I was back once more in Ireland, but this time in my true capacity as H.M. Inspector of Factories, free, to my intense relief, from the distasteful duty of make-believe. The Court of Petty Sessions in Dungloe became the centre of my activities, where I conducted in person in one case after another the prosecution of the offending "truck masters." Three of the principal shopkeepers of the county were prosecuted and convicted in November and December, 1899, for illegal payment of wages otherwise than in current coin of the realm. The case against the fourth, and he the chief offender, dragged on through a succession of hearings and adjournments into February, 1900. The proceedings meanwhile were further complicated by an additional charge of "obstructing the inspector in the execution of her duty," until the whole affair

[1] Annual Reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories, 1899, pages 275-277.

terminated in proceedings in the Court of Queen's Bench in Dublin in June, when the Irish Solicitor-General appeared for the Crown and Mr. Tim Healy, Q.C., M.P. (now Governor of the Irish Free State), appeared for the defendant. Every artifice which the Irishman's wit could devise was employed to prolong and complicate legal process, and to avoid conviction. Merely to repeat here the bare record of the sequence of events and the steps which led up to the High Court proceedings would be bewildering and tiresome. The result was, however, in the long run, to benefit the workers, and this earned the gratitude of all in the district except the " truck masters " themselves. Humour (never far to seek in Ireland) illuminated the whole of the proceedings from start to finish, and relieved what would otherwise have been an intolerable strain.

It was not unnatural, although as an experience it was distressing, that on my return as a Government official charged with the duty of conducting prosecutions against the shopkeepers—the rich and powerful members of the community—my former friends, whether among the peasants or the priests, should stand aloof. Witnesses had to be produced in court to testify to the truth of the facts already related by them in confidence, and this, as the date of hearing drew near, proved to be more than they had the courage to face. Those who were known to have spoken to me truly of the method of payment for work done were refused further work or further credit by the shopkeeper. Clergy who had

entertained me received bills for immediate payment of debts under threat of legal proceedings. As car-drivers, boatmen and others were all either servants of the shopkeepers or in their debt, it followed that when I needed means of conveyance, all with one consent made excuse—all except, in Dungloe itself, my faithful driver. At one stage in the long drawn-out succession of legal proceedings I found myself, by order of Dublin Castle, under police protection. Members of the R.I.C. patrolled the roads and others accompanied me on the car. When on the date fixed for the hearing of cases the witnesses, who had promised me and their priests that they would come, failed to appear, summonses were issued and had to be served on them in their homes at remote cabins many miles apart. This had to be done by an official of the court, the " summons-server." No addresses could be furnished to him of scattered habitations difficult to locate, and therefore for this, and other reasons not flattering to the court official, it was necessary for me to conduct him personally. Some days it took us. The faithful driver Coffey knew where to find the cabins we sought and we three set forth in the car in a time of almost unprecedented autumnal storms. The summons-server, Sharkey by name, and I made a strange pair ; I, in mackintosh, sou'wester and fisherman's long boots, he (at all times something resembling a stage ruffian) was, as he expressed it, " apparelled as a beggar," so as not to be easily recognised ! His appearance baffles description. No beggar would be seen in

such strange and patchy garments, a sack around his shoulders, trousers tied with straw at the knees, and a moleskin cap tied under his chin, his dark, good-humoured eyes beaming out of a pale, thin face fringed by straggling whiskers, and his chin dark and unshaven. When he and Coffey strove to entertain me so far as the rain and wind would permit, during the long car drives, the result was more comic than any comedy ever produced.

A lively recollection has always remained with me of a cross-country walk of a mile across trackless bog, in a wind against which, without Sharkey's hand, I could not stand, to a lonely cabin on a slab of rock. We found it deserted (as in almost every case), the inhabitants hiding on our approach, and having as usual nailed the notice to the door as "legal service" of the summons—we retraced our steps. But in recrossing a small turbulent stream by the rocking stones, and being probably weary with the battling with the wind, I lost my balance and fell. Lying on my back, the shallow water flowing round me, I saw Sharkey bending over me with such a look of consternation in his face that the absurdity of the whole situation overwhelmed me, and to his still further discomfiture I laughed so much that it was some moments before I could grasp his hand, outstretched to pull me up. As some of the witnesses disobeyed the summons, the case in which they should have appeared was adjourned for their arrest; but when the court assembled the police reported that they had been unable to execute the warrant as the cabins were

deserted—subsequently, it transpired that the attempt had never been made! Being duly reported to Dublin Castle, the police were severely reprimanded and the witnesses were arrested at a later date and produced in court.

The chief trouble throughout was caused by the difficulty of getting a fair hearing from the local bench of magistrates. It must be remembered that local feeling had been deeply roused, the Truck system was a burning question, all were personally involved on one side or the other—the scene was Ireland, the time was over twenty-five years ago. The bench was composed of local justices of the peace with the addition of the stipendiary magistrate, who presided, imported from a distance and called the "Resident Magistrate"—presumably, this being Ireland, because he alone was not a resident! An unpleasant incident may be related because it illustrates the kind of difficulties which surrounded the administration of justice in that district at this time.

One evening a few days before the date fixed for the hearing of the first cases to be taken in Dungloe, I was alone in my sitting-room in the hotel, when I was informed that a gentleman wished to see me, and that he was one of the local magistrates. He was shown in and in a melodramatic manner shut the door behind him and examined each window to see that the blinds were closely drawn. He then began to plead with me in impassioned tones, which became more and more embarrassing, that I should abandon the prosecution against his

relative and fellow-shopkeeper. He said he knew the evidence was so strong that the defendant could not escape conviction. In vain I asserted and re-asserted that I had no power, even if I desired, to stay proceedings, and with considerable difficulty I managed to terminate a most unpleasant scene and dismiss my visitor. A little later I was told that several women and girls were waiting to speak to me. I went down to see them and, finding they were my witnesses, I led them up to my sitting-room. I found that a man was following them into the room, and when he entered, I saw it was the aforesaid magistrate. He sat down and announced that he intended to remain and hear what the girls said. I, of course, objected, and requested him to leave. As he persistently refused and as the girls were terrified and became hysterical, I went out, calling to the girls to follow me, but as they attempted to do so he sprang up, put his arm across the doorway and flung the girls back into the room, shouting to me, "You go to h—l," and slammed the door in my face. Being outside on the landing and the girls shut in the room with the obstreperous magistrate I was in a dilemma, as I dare not leave them with him, so I called over the balustrade for the landlord and returned to the room. The landlord (who, as has been previously mentioned, was also clerk to the justices) came quickly and found the magistrate firmly seated and continuing a flow of objectionable language. At first magistrate and clerk engaged in an undignified wrangle over the situation, but finally the

latter's strong warnings, and forceful arm, induced the former to withdraw and the pair disappeared, leaving me to cope with the trembling girls. They promptly all took back their promise to appear as witnesses, and declared nothing would make them come to the court. This incident was duly reported to the authorities, but the magistrate continued to sit on the bench and adjudicate during three successive prosecutions of his fellow tradesmen and friends. It was on one of these occasions that before the Truck case came on this same justice of the peace descended from bench to dock, and, after being convicted and fined for being drunk on licensed premises on Sunday, resumed his seat.

I have already referred to the fact that the biggest contest centred in the prosecution of the powerful local magnate whose shop was in Dungloe itself, and every effort was made to prevent his sharing the fate which had overtaken those defendants whose business was carried on in other parts of the district. In the popular estimation the proceedings were a battleground on which it was to be decided "Whether John Sweeney shall rule Dungloe or the Law." When after several adjournments to secure the attendance of the witnesses the case could at last be heard, and evidence, which was truthfully given, supported the case for the prosecution, the bench retired to consider their verdict in private. On their return the chairman announced that the case was "dismissed on legal grounds," but added that he, the stipendiary and his colleague, another stipendiary added to the

bench on account of previous happenings, " desired to dissociate themselves from this decision, with which they entirely disagreed." As it appeared later that the " legal grounds " on which the local magistrates had dismissed the case was a quibble respecting the title under which the defendant traded, I was instructed by headquarters to issue a fresh summons and the case came on for hearing in February, 1900. This time the bench consisted of six local magistrates and four additional magistrates, including the two stipendiaries, and, as a new charge had also to be brought against the defendant for obstructing me, I was represented by the Crown Solicitor. This time the result in each case was that the bench was divided, four being in favour of a dismissal and four for conviction. During the hearing of these cases the court was the scene of an indescribable tumult. The defending solicitor fiercely attacked the presiding stipendiary magistrate, and demanded his withdrawal from the bench. Encouraged by one of the local magistrates, he became more and more abusive and called the chairman " a liar." The bench then rose and left the court. After a while they returned, and on the solicitor agreeing to withdraw his remark, the case proceeded, but not without difficulty, as the utmost confusion prevailed, several persons talking at once and each raising his voice louder to drown the other. The defendant insisted on so frequently interrupting his own solicitor, that at last the exasperated lawyer sat upon his client, not metaphorically but physically, using his

elbows alternately to push back the protesting head that appeared first on one side and then on the other of the eloquent advocate.

To make a long story short, the obstructive tactics of the magistrates continued and were met by the Government with such counterblasts as a "Peremptory Writ of Mandamus" to compel them to state a case for the opinion of the High Court of Queen's Bench in Dublin, and later a "Writ of Attachment" for their contempt of the said court in not complying with the "Mandamus."

Throughout the summer these various legal matters necessitated frequent visits to Ireland and consultations both there and in London with my official superiors and with Queen's Counsel and solicitors. The drama finally terminated in Dublin, in the more dignified but scarcely less humorous Irish atmosphere of the Queen's Bench in the stately building of the Four Courts, whose beauty was then unimpaired.

Our appeal to the High Court was restricted to points of law, and judgment, alas! went against us. It would be outside the scope of this narrative to enter at length into the legal aspect of this intricate matter. It must suffice here to say that the Irish decision in "Squire *v.* Sweeney" practically placed Irish home workers and outworkers outside the protection of the Truck Acts owing to the legal necessity (made clear by the terms of the judgment) that in every case it must be proved that there was a contract of service with the worker

that he or she should *personally* execute the work.[1] This interpretation of the law created great dissatisfaction and proved a serious obstacle in the path of reform, which had steadily been gaining ground as a consequence of the convictions obtained in the earlier cases, and the similar campaigns carried out both by myself and other inspectors, notably Miss Lucy Deane, in other parts of Ireland.[2] The Truck system had, however, received a serious check from the publicity given to it, and workers, emboldened to ask for money payment, obtained it.

As decisions of the High Court in Ireland were not binding in the English courts, the Government decided to continue to enforce the Truck Act, 1831, in England as regards home workers and outworkers. This was done the same year, and convictions were obtained, as stated at the opening of this chapter, in Cornwall and Somerset. In 1905 I had occasion to prosecute lace manufacturers in Nottingham for similar payment in goods of outworkers employed by them, and when the magistrates dismissed a case we appealed to the High Court. The result here was the same as in Dublin, and this time there was no escape from the effect of the judgment. Squire *v.* Midland Lace Manufacturing Co. did for England what Squire *v.* Sweeney did in Ireland and practically withdrew the protection of the Truck Acts, 1831–1896, from outworkers and home workers, a very helpless body of workers, who, as the judges

[1] See leader in the *Morning Post*, August 15th, 1900.

[2] "Women in the Factory," by Dame Adelaide Anderson, pages 81-82.

recognised, needed the protection these Acts afford. These facts received the careful consideration of the Truck Committee of 1908, which had the whole history before them in evidence given by myself and other officials of the Home Office, and they recommended that legislation should be undertaken to restore to home workers the protection of the Truck Acts equally with other manual workers. Twenty years have passed since English outworkers, and twenty-six since Irish outworkers were deprived of what had previously been regarded as their legal right—but the need still exists for the legislation which is still delayed. There are ways other than those related in this chapter in which industrial workers suffer if the Truck Acts are not enforced, and adventures in tracking these in the factories as well as among outworkers must be told in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII

FINES AND DEDUCTIONS

1903–1905

The Truck Act, 1896—Fining in factories—Heavy deductions from sweated wages—Girls unjustly charged for damaged work—Benefits from enforcement of Act—Further reform overdue.

IN the previous chapter the practice of paying wages illegally, in kind instead of in cash, has been dealt with and the enforcement of the older Truck Acts, 1831 and 1887, has been described. Such methods of paying wages in goods had long ago disappeared from the better organised trades and lingered only in certain districts among outworkers in sweated industries. Other varieties of " truck " were, however, common in nearly every trade in the early years of this century. These consisted in fines and deductions from wages, particularly among the less well paid and organised workers. Such workers had no security that they would receive the full wages to which they were entitled. In many trades the custom of fining for unpunctuality or small breaches of discipline, or charging the workers for the lighting, heating, or use of the workroom, or for materials to be used up in the work, was common. The practice had

grown to such dimensions as to have become an intolerable burden, especially in the case of women and girls earning low wages. The Truck Act, 1896, was specially designed to provide some relief from this state of things, and when it came into force in January, 1897, we women inspectors soon found our hands full in applying it to the many cases of hardship brought to our notice. At first the Act was widely misunderstood. Employers thought that they had only to post up a list of the fines and deductions to make them legal, and the workers seeing the lists thought the Act made their position worse. Our first task was to scrutinise their lists and explain that only if the fines and charges conformed to certain conditions would they be legal. By degrees the fact was recognised that, difficult as this Act is of interpretation, it afforded protection to the workers from the worst impositions. From all parts of the country complaints of heavy and vexatious deductions poured in upon the inspectors. The strict enforcement of the law led to a marked general reduction in the practice of indiscriminate fining and heavy charges for alleged damages to work or materials. For many years, however, as I can testify from my own experience, the staff were kept fully occupied dealing with individual employers or groups of factories in certain industries or towns where old practices which were unreasonable and oppressive existed. Much improvement was effected by persuasion and advice, but frequently the application of the Act to particular practices was strongly disputed and the

meaning of the words had to be tested in the courts. Such prosecutions on points of law entailed a great amount of labour in the collection of evidence and the preparation and delivery of legal argument necessary to support the Home Office views before the magistrates. My task was not in these cases made lighter by the fact that so often they had to be argued before a provincial bench of justices of the peace unversed in legal subtleties and sometimes with an undisguised bias in favour of the defendant or of the practices under discussion. Great interest was manifested locally in such prosecutions, especially when learned counsel was briefed to defend! Then the friendly officials of the court would greet my appearance at the solicitor's table to prosecute with a hurried whisper: "You have Mr. So-and-so, K.C., against you, Miss!"

The breaches of the Act which caused most hardship, and also raised difficult questions of law which had to be fought out in the courts, were in respect of fines imposed for alleged unpunctuality or bad behaviour, deductions or charges for spoilt work or damage to the employer's property, or charges made for materials or tools. The low wages of women and girls made the imposition of fines and charges particularly oppressive in these cases, and therefore a large share of the enforcement of the Truck Act fell to the women inspectors, and for one reason or another a considerable part of this duty devolved upon me. Instances in my own experience crowd upon my memory, and some of them have already acquired a certain publicity

in press notices of prosecutions, in the published reports of the department, and of the evidence I gave before the Truck Committee in 1908.[1]

The custom of fining workers for late arrival of work was almost universal and was generally considered to be the only method of securing punctuality—that the system failed to induce punctuality in the few habitually late, and caused distress and dissatisfaction to the punctual worker who was accidentally delayed, was seldom appreciated until it was pointed out and some other method was substituted with success. The Truck Act, 1906, by requiring the employer to keep a register of fines did good service in drawing attention to the incidence of fines upon individual workers, a matter overlooked when no record was kept—some workers were found to be regularly losing a fixed sum every week. The inspector noted this and asked why; inquiry was made and rarely was the reason found to be mere carelessness or laziness. Generally some difficulty in means of transport from home to factory was the cause, or children or a sick husband to be seen to. When (as was not unusual) the fine for being five minutes late—arriving at the gates five minutes past six instead of 6 a.m.—entailed an amount of fines equivalent to an hour's pay the loss at the end of the week was serious, and in the case of pieceworkers was felt to be an imposition and was greatly resented. But fines for minor breaches of discipline were the most vexatious and were the cause of many prosecutions. Sometimes

1 "Truck Committee," Vol. II., Cd. 4443, pages 79-103.

the vague rule was included in a contract, such as "Any act of misconduct 6d.," and the interpretation was left to the whim of any foreman. Under the term of misconduct, or a breach of discipline, I have had many times to question the legality of fines actually inflicted for sneezing, laughing and singing—for wearing hair curlers. Of course, "cheeking the foreman" was an offence which might be serious, but in the absence of any court of appeal the power to impose a heavy fine for it was liable to abuse. Some lists of such disciplinary fines of enormous length were found affixed in factories, every possible act or omission being included, and the amounts ranging from sixpence to five shillings. One prosecution of mine, which made a considerable stir at the time, was heard in Bristol in 1901, and subsequently went to appeal before the High Court, and was in respect of some fines imposed on girls employed in a corset factory for the offence of "dancing to a harp during their dinner hour." The little girls, having sat sewing all the morning, had one day during their dinner hour (taken in the workroom, there being no mess-room), naturally, as it would seem, taken some exercise by dancing about, while one of them performed on a harp of the variety played by the mouth and called, I think, a "Jew's harp"! The employer maintained that the fine imposed for this act was legally made under a contract requiring that "due order and decorum must be maintained"—our view was that these terms were too vague to satisfy the requirement of the Act

and allowed for arbitrary and unreasonable fines. Unfortunately the magistrates' adverse decision was upheld by the High Court. This case, however, had a beneficial effect among employers, who condemned the action of the firm, and reformed their own methods to conform to the official view which had been set out in the legal proceedings. This, and other cases in which appeal to the High Court on points of law have resulted in an adverse decision have demonstrated the need for amendment of the Truck Act if the workers are to have the benefit these statutes were designed to provide. The abolition by law of all fines and deductions has been strongly advocated in some quarters, and private bills have from time to time been brought forward with this object. Those who support prohibition rather than regulation of the power of an employer to fine his workers must consider lest in stopping fines encouragement should be given to the use by the unscrupulous employer of other undesirable methods. If a rigid enforcement of the present Acts has stimulated the adoption of such methods as the following what may not prohibition of all fining do ? I have known a firm employing nearly 3,000 girls drop fines for unpunctuality but lower the piecework rate during the week as a punishment for late comers ! Another announced that every worker who was late would be instantly dismissed, and re-engaged at a shilling a week less ! Yet another kept all who came five minutes late at work for an extra hour without extra pay ! It may be admitted these were not

the best employers and that these particular instances happened many years ago, and yet only this year in which I write an employer, well known as in the front rank of welfare work, in whose factory fines are not imposed, has suspended a girl for one month for carelessness, well knowing that unemployment in the district is serious and that she is not eligible for unemployment benefit.

The wholesale clothing trade, which includes men's ready-made tailoring, the mass production of men's shirts and collars, and of ladies' blouses, dresses, aprons and underclothing, employs almost exclusively women and girls both in the factories and workshops and as outworkers. Prior to 1909, when the Trade Boards Act was passed, there was no minimum wage fixed for these trades and wages were incredibly low. Coupled with this " sweated " wage a system of fines and deductions for spoilt or imperfect work was common. This system was particularly oppressive in certain districts, especially among the wholesale tailoring firms in Leeds, Bristol and London, and the shirt and collar factories in the West of England and in Ireland. The practice in the tailoring establishments was that any worker whose work was " spoilt " or not up to standard was required to pay for the garment. The price charged was fixed by the employer or manager and might or not be a fair amount; equally the responsibility of the worker for the alleged damage was assessed by the employer or his agent without any right of appeal by the worker. It is obvious that the practice admitted of

considerable injustice and hardship in a transaction between the employer (or his servants) on the one hand and a poorly paid employee on the other.

It was sometimes urged that the worker was not hardly dealt by if she were allowed to take the damaged garment, but a woman or girl was sometimes hard put to it to dispose of men's clothing and raffles of articles the workgirls had been forced to pay for were common in many factories. These raffles were doubtfully legal in any case, and in some large works the contributions towards them became a weekly tax on all the employees. Some examples of cases in which the employers were prosecuted were as follows: In one wholesale tailoring factory among the women stitching trousers of a poor quality a woman who was paid a wage of 4d. a pair was charged 1s. 4d.; another who was paid 6d. was charged 6s. 6d.; another received 2s. for making an overcoat throughout and was charged 22s. 6d. She had eight children, one an infant, and had had to borrow from the firm while laid up, and was still in their debt. Another worker who accidentally damaged a vest was made to purchase the whole suit. I successfully prosecuted a firm for illegal charges for alleged damaged work who had made a girl buy a dozen pair of trousers for £3—her wages were so small that the sum was deducted in weekly instalments. When I discovered the case this had been going on for a year and 30s. had already been stopped; she was a single girl who had been unable to dispose of any of the dozen pairs of trousers.

The fault for which the garments had been charged up to her was that the hip pockets had been set in at a wrong angle; no pattern had, however, been given to her and she had never done similar work. Often I found that the "damage" was due to inexperience, to lack of training or of supervision, or to faulty machines—it was easier and cheaper to throw the burden of purchase upon the worker than to spend money on training or on supervisors to look after the workers or the machinery or tools. Every firm successfully prosecuted for such illegal deductions or charges for alleged bad work afterwards gave up the practice, and many who were warned did the same; I never heard that any regretted it. The workers were more satisfied and the firms profited by securing themselves by better management against careless or accidental damage. When damage did occur such garments as were not up to standard were put into a "job sale department" where any workers who wished could freely purchase what they chose, and no loss was incurred by the firm.

The evidence given in the police courts by women called to testify to the details necessary to support the charge brought against their employer was often quite dramatic, and the magistrates had at times to repress expressions by the public of sympathy with the witness or hostility to the defendant. I recall the effect produced in court by a young girl's story of how she had been charged 14s. 7d. for two dozen hunting ties for which she was paid 2½d. a dozen—how she had to work

rapidly to earn a miserable week's wage at that rate, and how the only fault in these two dozen ties was that the button-holes were said to be too far apart and she had no instructions as to where they should be placed. She was told she could take the ties, but they were of no use to her—she was paying for them bit by bit.

A South London shirt and collar factory girl kept the whole court (including the magistrate, myself and the lawyers awaiting their cases) amused while she parried the sharp questions hurled at her by a bullying solicitor in cross-examination. She was a typical Londoner of the coster type in a much be-feathered hat, probably borrowed or hired for the occasion, and, having answered the questions I had put to her in a perfectly decorous manner, she now, with arms akimbo, poured forth, in finest Cockney, invective, raillery, and ridicule to meet the rude and sneering manner of the defendant's lawyer. No one tried to stem the flood of her rhetoric, and we all enjoyed the discomfiture of her opponent, which was richly deserved! This girl had been charged several pounds for three dozen collars on which she had earned a few pence for her share in making them; the collars had been wrongly cut, and it was alleged that she should have drawn attention to the fact before setting to work on them. It is difficult for those unacquainted with the subject to realise how, in the making of garments wholesale, the machinist's weekly wages is made up of a number of entries for small amounts earned at the piece-work rate

for stitching large quantities of articles, and that speed in passing one batch through and getting on to the next is essential if a wage is to be kept up to the accustomed level.

A prolonged inquiry in a trade very different from that of clothing occupied some considerable portion of my time in 1902. This was concerned with steel pen manufacture, an industry almost entirely confined to a small area in Birmingham and including firms of world-wide fame. When I gave evidence before the Truck Committee I was asked to give some particulars of this inquiry as an illustration of deduction for spoilt or imperfect work pressing hardly upon women in a trade peculiarly their own, and I did so as follows :[1]

" . . . The making of steel pens is skilled work, and it is entirely hand work. With each article made—each pen—its perfection depends entirely upon the judgment and skill of the worker ; there is nothing automatic about it ; each pen must be perfect or it is no use to the penmaker, and it depends actually upon the woman's right judgment and manipulation of the tool and of the pen as to whether the pen is successful. The wages would be from 1s. 9d. to 3s. 6d. per 100 gross. That would take her from one and a half to two days. When the finished work was examined any shortage over two gross allowed for waste would be charged against the worker at the rate of 6d. a gross. It was not uncommon to find a woman who earned, say, 2s. 6d. for doing 90 gross of pens fined 6s. or

[1] " Truck Committee," Vol. II., Cd. 4443, page 87.

7s. for waste. In that case because the wage was too small to allow of the fine being deducted all at once it would be taken off by instalments, the worker not infrequently getting more and more in arrears as fresh fines were debited against her until she was found to be in some instances several pounds in debt to her employer."

Although a careful account was kept of the amount of waste to be debited against each worker I found no accurate reckoning made of the number of pens given out to be done, and to put the whole matter right it was necessary not only to see that the full protection of the Truck Act was secured to the employees but also that the number of gross given out was checked and a record supplied to each woman at the time the work was given out to her. This statement in writing of the amount of work to be done and the price to be paid for it was therefore made compulsory in the steel pen trade in 1900 by order of the Secretary of State under the Particulars Clause of the Factory Act. By these means matters were put on a just and sound footing in this trade.

It would now be generally conceded that it rests with the factory occupier to provide at his expense all things necessary for the performance of the work, including room, machinery, heat, light and the materials to be used, but this has only come about by the process of development in trade after trade, as each industry or district emerged from the more primitive condition in which each individual operative provided these things for

himself. In some places and in some trades the custom of charging the worker for any or all of these things when supplied by his employers died hard, and in some instances it still persists. The Truck Acts made special provision for the regulation of such charges. They were not prohibited (except in the hosiery trade)[1] altogether, as this would have caused endless trouble in the adjustment of wages, but they were only permitted when made the subject of a contract, and when the amount deducted or charged did not exceed the cost to the employer. A strange medley of charges were sometimes found, ranging from the almost universal charge for sewing cotton and needles in the clothing trades to charges for "standing room" in old-fashioned rural hosiery and woollen mills. There would be charges for gas for lighting the factory, charges for steam or electric power, for parts of sewing or other machines, for books, for entering wages, for overalls, clogs, etc.; and even the doubtfully legal and objectionable charge for cleaning the factory. Many of these things were charged at an exorbitant rate and were a source of profit, particularly in cases where the amount per head had been fixed in days when the thing supplied was comparatively costly and never altered when modern methods had reduced the expense to a minimum. As the provisions of the Act became well known the women and girls in the clothing factories became very careful in their scrutiny of any fresh contracts requiring them to

[1] See Hosiery Manufactures (Wages) Act, 1874.

pay for their sewing cotton. The employees from different firms would come to my office to ask whether in regard to such and such prices it would be right that they should sign a contract submitted to them. In most cases the charges proposed needed reduction. In one case fifteen girls were summarily dismissed for refusing to sign; they called and asked me to make inquiries, and on visiting the works I found that the amount to be charged for cotton and needles was in excess of the cost to the employer. This was adjusted, and the employer reinstated the girls.

A great deal more might be written on the subject of deductions and payments from wages, and the examples selected from my own experience alone might be multiplied a hundredfold, but enough has perhaps been recounted to indicate that the Truck Acts, with all their imperfections, have proved to be a useful and necessary addition to our industrial laws as part of the relations of master and servant. Their need for amendment has been made abundantly clear throughout the whole course of their history, which is punctuated by appeals to the High Court, resulting in judicial decisions difficult of application to the varying circumstances which arise in practice. Amending Bills have been produced and have died away—the recommendations of the Truck Committee of 1908 still stand as the nearest approach to a solution of the various problems which is satisfactory to all but the prohibitionists, and meanwhile slow progress is being made towards conditions in which the worst

evils against which the Truck Acts were aimed simply cannot exist. The Trade Board Act of 1909 raised wages by enabling trades to fix minimum wages to be paid free of deductions, and by the amending Act, 1918, this was extended to prohibit even those deductions and payments which were lawful under the Truck Acts, but excepting contributions towards National Health Insurance. The growth of welfare work and of welfare supervision has introduced other and saner methods of encouraging good behaviour and eliminating waste produced by untrained and poorly equipped workers. Reductions in the hours of work, to say nothing of better feeding of women and girls due to higher wages, and canteens and mess-rooms for taking meals in the factory, have made their contribution towards improved health and lessened fatigue. The effect is incidentally reflected in the diminished or disused fine register.

An amended Truck Act is still needed to bring the bad practice of the few into line with the reasonable practice of the majority, and to prevent any recrudescence of evils such as have filled the Blue Books of the past. Hurried legislation will not do; a consolidating and amending Truck Act requires an atmosphere of calm judgment and clear thinking.

CHAPTER VIII

THE POOR LAW INQUIRY

1906–1907

The Royal Commission on the Poor Law—Appointment as Special Investigator—"Paupers" interviewed—Labour conditions which pauperise—Causes of destitution—Progress in the amelioration of pauperising conditions in the last twenty years—Tuberculosis—Gannister Miners—Tin Miners—Descent of a Cornish mine.

I HAD been a factory inspector for ten years when the first break in the ordinary pursuit of my official duties occurred and my services were temporarily transferred to another Department. This was in 1906, when I was lent by the Home Office to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, and worked under the auspices of the Local Government Board, which was then the Central Authority for the administration of the Poor Law. The change which detached me from my moorings and sent me out on an uncharted sea came with that suddenness which in the Government service, as by "an act of God," alters the current of life and calls for unhesitating acceptance and immediate adjustment to new circumstances and new demands. The preliminary stages of the negotiations between the Departments were, and are, hid from me, but in June, 1906, I found myself appointed "Special Investigator" to the Royal Commission. I was

instructed to report myself to the chairman, Lord George Hamilton, forthwith, and I have a very pleasant recollection of my kind reception by that very distinguished and courteous gentleman. My introduction to my fellow Special Investigator, Mr. (now Sir Arthur) Steel-Maitland, followed, and we arranged for further meetings to settle a plan of campaign. The enterprise was an adventure which thrilled while it somewhat scared me! I had at that time only a very general acquaintance with the Poor Law and its ramifications. The tragedy of destitution and the responsibility of the State for its relief had already thrust itself upon my attention in the course of my work, and I eagerly grasped the opportunity now afforded me of probing into the problem, and contributing in some small degree to its solution.

The Royal Commission under which we were to work had been appointed under Royal Warrant of December 5th, 1905, "to inquire into the working of the law relating to the relief of poor persons in the United Kingdom, and into various means taken outside the Poor Law for meeting distress arising from unemployment, and to consider and report what changes, if any, in the Poor Law and its administration were desirable." It was not surprising that the Commission was (as subsequently stated in their Report)[1] "impressed from the outset with the immense scope of the investigation entrusted" to them. The previous Royal

[1] Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and Relief of Distress, 1909, Cd. 4496, page 2.

Commission on the Poor Law had been held in 1832, and was followed by the great Poor Law Act of 1834. Since that time conditions had undergone a complete transformation and nearly a hundred reports on various subjects connected with Poor Relief had been submitted to Government. The Royal Commission of 1906, under the chairmanship of Lord George Hamilton, consisted of eighteen members, including the President of the Local Government Board, Sir Henry Robinson. The members with whom I was most concerned were Mr. Charles Booth, of "Darkest London" fame, Mr. George Lansbury, and the three women members, Mrs. Sidney Webb, Miss Octavia Hill and Mrs. Bosanquet. I think Mrs. Sidney Webb had, to some extent, stood sponsor for both my colleague and myself, and with her at the beginning, and from time to time during our inquiry, we specially discussed, not only our own particular subject, but the principles and problems of poor relief and its administration. Such discussions on industrial and other matters it has been my privilege both before that term and since to enjoy with Mrs. Sidney Webb, and always they have roused me to fresh effort and enthusiasm.

The Commission in planning out methods of attacking its immense task decided to appoint "Special Investigators" to act as its eyes and ears. Their reasons for doing so, as stated in their Report, fit aptly the theme I have taken upon me to illustrate by this record of my official life. The Commission say "certain aspects of the subject

matter referred to us seemed to require for their elucidation a personal and local investigation in typical districts which we could not ourselves undertake." "Persons of tact and skill" were therefore chosen and instructed "to collect, classify and summarise evidence." They were required to obtain their information by personal observation and inquiry, and by examination of documents. It is satisfactory to record that, commenting on the reports furnished by these "Special Investigators" at the conclusion of their labours, the Commission say "their reports bear witness to the care, zeal and ability with which the inquiries have been carried out, and we feel that the Commission and the nation are indebted to them for their patient and difficult researches." The full list of Special Investigators and the subjects allotted to them is given on page 5 of the Commission's Report. First on the list are the names of Mr. A. D. Steel-Maitland and myself—our subject, "The relation of industrial and sanitary conditions to pauperism." Second come Mr. Thomas Jones and Miss Constance Williams—their subject, "The effect of outdoor relief on wages and conditions of employment." Third Mr. Cyril Jackson and the Rev. J. C. Pringle—their subject, inquiries respecting assistance given outside the Poor Law to the unemployed. These were the three pairs of Investigators—four men and two women; there were other Investigators who worked alone on the medical and other technical matters entrusted to them. With the exception of Miss Constance Williams, who resumed

her literary work, each of the other members of the pairs continued afterwards the pursuit of lines of social work in the Public Service similar to those for which the Commission chose them—Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland as Member of Parliament and subsequently Minister of Labour, Sir Cyril Jackson as member and alderman of the London County Council, Mr. Pringle as secretary of the Charity Organisation Society, Professor Thomas Jones as Principal Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet; while I continued my way on the industrial side of the Home Office, with temporary service in the Ministry of Munitions, and the Ministry of Labour as the following pages record.

I was indeed fortunate in the subject allotted to me by the Commission, and no less in the colleague assigned to me. Young, keen, clever, endowed with immense energy, mental and physical, he made an inspiring companion, with whom it was a pleasure to work. He brought a fresh and analytical mind and brilliant intellect to the study and exploration of industrial problems and to the task of estimating the value of statistics and the weighing of evidence. My contribution to our common stock was an intimate knowledge and experience of industrial conditions and of the lives of the working people. Happily we both possessed a sense of humour which saved us from the depression which would have otherwise overwhelmed us at times in plumbing the depths of destitution and degradation.

In a memorandum defining the scope of our

inquiry we were directed to ascertain "to what extent the prevalence of the undermentioned industrial and sanitary conditions contributed to pauperism, *i.e.*, (i.) Dangerous and unhealthy trades; (ii.) Casual labour; (iii.) Seasonal trades; (iv.) The housing of the poor. Surely a gigantic task! For its proper accomplishment we realised that it required the services of a band of skilled investigators over a period of years. We were instructed to pursue our inquiry in London for three months, and in typical provincial towns for four months, and to furnish our complete report in eight months. Inevitably, although we worked with all speed, it was twelve months before we could place our final Report in the hands of the Commission. What we did was to take a general survey of such statistical and other information as was available for our purpose in Government Departments and local sanitary and Poor Law authorities, and to make intensive inquiry by way of sample in certain centres. We visited (after finishing our three months in London), Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol, St. Helens and the five pottery towns, and made inquiry in the tin mining and other parts of Cornwall. We were fortunate in securing from time to time for short periods the assistance of competent voluntary helpers—among others Mrs. (now Lady) Steel-Maitland, who had experience in after-care work; and we owed much to our indefatigable Secretaries, Miss Eleanor Wright and Miss Edith Hartnell, who worked for us throughout our inquiry. We

spared them, I fear, no more than we spared ourselves! Subsequently they were among the first women to be appointed Poor Law relieving officers. In addition to their clerical duties these ladies and some of the voluntary helpers were employed for many weeks in interviewing inmates of workhouses and infirmaries. By means of a carefully prepared questionnaire, and with the co-operation of the officials of such institutions, the interviewers, by the exercise of their unfailing tact and sympathy, obtained for us in this way the life histories of thousands of "paupers." The value of accumulated personal evidence from "the destitute" themselves caused us to extend our system of interviewing to the individuals receiving out-relief in their own homes. This work my colleague and I undertook personally, as it enabled us to see for ourselves the housing conditions in the slums of London and other cities. Generally I chatted and questioned while my companion rapidly took notes. We easily obtained all the information we could desire as it was poured out without reserve. The difficulty was to record the salient facts for future use, as the appearance of paper and pencil stopped the flow of confidences. Necessity is the mother of invention, and we found that a bowler hat held in the hand of the gentleman visitor afforded a convenient screen for the notebook and moving hand of the scribe, and allowed of the friendly chat with the lady being carried on undisturbed!

The main part of our work was, however, accomplished by visits to factories, docks, mines and

interviews with local officials. Previous to this service with the Royal Commission it had been my duty to confine my inspections to factories and workshops where women and girls were employed, but now I had to visit and become intimately acquainted with men's industries and the conditions of men's labour, their hours and wages. The information I thus gained proved exceedingly useful in my subsequently resumed service at the Home Office and also during the war. As a member of the "Health of Munitions Workers Committee," and in connection with women's war work in substitution for men withdrawn for the fighting services, I had in 1914 and onwards to deal with men's industrial conditions and processes. We have learnt now, largely owing to war-time experience, that men and women cannot be segregated as if they were different species! The interests of all members of the human family are one, and where in any department of modern life specialisation is necessary—whether in matters industrial, educational, or medical—it can only be safely carried out if the needs of the whole community are kept in mind and the agents employed have first been trained in a wider sphere. Accustomed as I was to the hard physical and economic conditions under which in those days women and girls in industry commonly worked, I was painfully impressed during our Poor Law inquiry by the even greater hardships endured by men in industrial work and the scant attention they had received. Even the elementary sanitation of the

Factory Act was denied to men in workshops unless working in company with women![1] Granted that it was "the bottom dog" with which we as Special Investigators were chiefly concerned, and that the claimant for Poor Relief is often the lazy and the vicious person. We had, however, good reason to know before our inquiry was finished that it was often far otherwise. Honest, hard-working, steady men were reduced to destitution by the conditions under which they were employed. I cannot even now recall without hot indignation and shame the cold facts of excessive hours, miserably inadequate wages, exposure to wet, to heat, to dust, to poisonous materials in the heavy iron and steel trades, in chemical works, in white lead, paint and pottery works, to say nothing of the inhuman system (or lack of system) of casual labour at the docks.

It must be remembered that at the time of which I am writing there was no Workmen's Compensation for industrial diseases, no National Health Insurance, no Old Age Pensions, no Widows' Pensions, no Employment Exchanges, no Trade Boards. Voluntary co-operation of associations of employers and employed and Joint Industrial Councils came later. The great systems of public health services now functioning in connection with tuberculosis and maternity and infant welfare were only in their infancy and the public campaign against the ravages of venereal disease had not commenced. These and other measures, beside providing a

[1] Factory and Workshops Act, 1901, Section 129.

remedy for many of the causes of destitution, have incidentally reduced that which is admittedly the chief of all causes of pauperism, *i.e.*, "Drink." Those—and they are many—who are inclined to sneer at the work of the Royal Commission of 1906 as abortive should look around and take stock of the reforms which (although it may be in piecemeal fashion) have followed in the wake of the Commission and its monumental Report. Let us, amidst all that there is still to depress us in industrial and social conditions, and while determined not to relax our efforts for reform, thankfully acknowledge that progress has been made. The Poor Law problem of to-day is not the same problem as it was twenty years ago. The reformers need to consider new measures to meet present-day requirements. The Commission's recommendations for administrative changes, whether they be those of the majority or the minority reports, cannot now be adopted as they stand, but must be reviewed in the light of the development which has taken place.

I am tempted here to give actual examples of the conditions sanitary and industrial obtaining in 1906 and 1907, which "contributed to pauperism," but I refrain. The dry bones of fact are enshrined (or should I say are buried?) in our joint report published as Volume XVI. of the 36 volumes of the Appendix to the Royal Commission's report. I may perhaps, however, be excused if I prolong this chapter in order to recall the net result of our special inquiry and give one or two

instances of industrial evils which then called urgently for reform and still await further action.

Our main conclusions, drawn from the facts reported and endorsed by the Royal Commission, were that the chief industrial causes of pauperism were as follows: First, casual and irregular employment. Second, bad housing. Third, unhealthy trades and insanitary, injurious and exhausting conditions of employment. Fourth, low wages, that is, earnings habitually below what is required for healthy subsistence.

First and foremost among the factors producing destitution we unhesitatingly placed tuberculosis. It drained the wage-earning capacity of the worker before it laid him aside, bringing him and his family lower and lower, finally leaving widows and children as paupers to be kept on the relieving officer's books for years. Here cause and effect were clear and unmistakable. The trade and working conditions of the sufferer were in numerous individual cases found to be responsible for the illness. As regards factories and workshops we were of opinion that the provisions of the Factory Act and the power under the Act to make regulations in the case of dangerous trades were sufficient—provided the Act and Regulations were rigidly enforced in all these places—to deal with insanitary and dusty premises and processes. As regards labour outside the Factory Acts, especially in certain metalliferous mining operations, further legislative and administrative action was urgently required. Of this the Home Office (then the responsible Central Authority for

the Mines) was fully aware, and measures had already been taken by special rules, etc., to cope with the conditions injurious to health. Scientific inquiry, followed by legislative and administrative action, has been carried on during the twenty intervening years with marked effect.

The result of work in the gannister and tin-mining industries upon the health of the miners was forced upon our attention by the heavy expenditure on Poor Law relief in certain districts of Yorkshire and Cornwall. In the extraction of gannister rock (used in lining Bessemer steel furnaces) the miners are exposed to inhalation of the peculiarly hard silica dust, which causes severe injury to the lungs. The men suffered at an early age from gannister disease ("fibroid phthisis"), a specific trade disease infecting workers employed in this work, and after weeks of illness died, leaving wives and families to be supported by the Guardians. In house after house we found men in the grip of this most distressing disease, coughing out their lives. The bodily suffering was aggravated by the burden of destitution, relieved only by the medical benefit and outdoor relief of the Poor Law. The number of widows, mostly with large families, was out of all proportion to the population of the district. One Works in particular was chiefly responsible, and it was startling to hear the cause of the poverty and suffering of the neighbourhood spoken of everywhere as "L's disease." The Home Office, alarmed by the record of illness, had made inquiry in 1900, and Special Rules had been brought into

force in 1905. These, among other precautions, required respirators to be provided and worn—this rule was at the time I write of not well observed. The respirator if provided was more often in the pocket than over the mouth. I remember how one man, after fumbling in his pocket, produced a respirator to the lady visitor (I had in his mind no remotest relation to such a thing as an inspector), and when (so as to see what he would say) I inquired what it was for he naïvely replied "to put over your mouth when the inspector comes round." A similar disease was also prevalent in the gold mines of South Africa, whither the Cornish tin miners went in search of employment and attracted by high wages. Many of them contracted the disease and came home, broken men, to die, leaving their widows chargeable to the Poor Law. The subject was carefully investigated in 1911 by a Commission appointed by the South African Government. From 1910 to 1914 a Royal Commission on Metalliferous Mines investigated the question in this country. Other scientific inquiries followed.[1] As a result of the conclusions reached, the Workmen's Compensation (Silicosis) Act, 1918, was passed, and the Home Office worked out a scheme of compensation and medical supervision in consultation with representatives of both the employers and employed.

Among the tin miners in Cornwall there was a

[1] See Report by Mr. Sydney Smith and Dr. Edgar Collis, H.M. Inspectors of Factories, on the Manufacture of Bricks, and Milroy Lecture on Pneumoniconiosis, 1915, by Dr. E. Collis.

similar effect produced by the excessive sickness and death-rate upon the Poor Relief of certain districts. The disease, fibroid phthisis, was caused by the inhalation of rock dust by miners using the machine drill. The use of a water spray directed upon the rapidly revolving drill was required by regulations, and also the sprinkling of the floors of the mine workings. The object was to allay the fine dust and prevent it getting into the air breathed by the workers. We found, however, even when we were ourselves present down in the mine watching the process of drilling the rock, that no water spray was in use and no concern at its absence was shown by the manager who accompanied us. After observing the process in various parts of the mine we thought it about time to ask about the water spray, and the men, being then reprimanded by the manager for failing to use it, made vain efforts to do so. The hose, when at last found, was without the necessary nozzle attached, and its length fell short by some feet of the point where the drill was in use! When we succeeded in seeing at last the whole apparatus duly functioning we instantly realised why the men were reluctant to use it, for, the operation being that of drilling the roof overhead, the water directed upwards on to the drill poured down upon the shoulders of the operators. The neglect of precautions will happen whether in mines or in factories, however carefully regulations be drawn up and enforced when the appropriate Government Inspector is present, unless employers and employed take themselves

an intelligent interest in their design and use. I cannot leave the subject of mines (which were outside my sphere of duty except during the brief period of my work for the Poor Law Commission) without paying my tribute of gratitude and admiration to the men who serve the community in the bowels of the earth, in dust and heat and danger. I have found other industries more nauseous, more nerve-racking by reason of noise, vibration and speeding up, more trying on account of fœtid air, in ill-ventilated, overcrowded rooms, and requiring more tiresome attention to minute details in regard to poisonous materials. Mines, however, have a quality of dreariness and of aloofness from the common life of men which has to be reckoned with even if we admit that lives are in no greater danger than in the modern street or on board a liner. Women are not allowed to work in mines. I was told afterwards that for all my official permit from the Royal Commission I had no business to have gone down what is said to be the deepest tin mine in the world! The managers dared not refuse me, and I naturally accompanied my fellow investigator there as elsewhere. It was a weird experience for us both. Dressed as miners in drill suits and bowler hats stiffened as hard as rock to resist any hard knocks to which our heads might otherwise be exposed, we descended in an awful chute in which each person lies as in a coffin, and being warned not to raise head or hand lest the shaft face should remove it, we sped in darkness down and down into the earth. The mine is over 3,000

feet deep—our chute only took us part of the way. When we emerged from our "cases" we were each supplied with a candle stuck in a ball of clay, and we were shown how, having moistened this in the stream of water trickling down the sides and floor of the passage in which we stood, to stick it on to the front of the bowler hat. This left our hands free, and for the next period of time—was it ten minutes or ten years ?—one by one we followed each other down a ladder lying on the vertical side of the rock. The little flicker of candle flame only served to make the darkness more profound, one foot after another felt for and found the next rung, and with hands grasping the sides of the ladder for dear life, the only sound the rush of water beside us, I proceeded, a man being above me and one or more below me on the ladder. At length we reached another resting-place, and after walking along a gallery where men were working in the flitting lights and shadows, we once more made a descent. This was less steep than before, and with loose stones beneath us grinding under our feet, grasping a rope hand-over-hand, slipping and sliding, we arrived, breathless and dusty and hand-sore, at the bottom and found ourselves in a wide roadway. Thenceforward for an hour or two we traversed roads of varying width, sometimes hurrying into alcoves cut in the rock, while blasting took place, and the noise of the explosion first seemed to hit one on the chest and then reverberating through the cavernous depths died away. Sometimes we took refuge again for the passage of train-loads

of material, the trucks shambling their noisy way along the rails. Here and there groups of figures loomed into sight, and the manager thoughtfully called out at times : " I am bringing a lady to see you," as the unprecedented presence of a woman was not suggested by my appearance, which was rather that of a lad ! The heat was terrific, and being very damp was very trying. My clothing was soon saturated, and the miners had discarded all but the minimum. A minute dust covered face and hands and lined the mouth. Where the rock drill was at work the dust present everywhere was intensified, and the means taken to mitigate its effect and the result of its inhalation I have already referred to. When our party emerged once more into the light of day we were scarcely recognisable, and to me at least, until I had bathed and donned dry garments, life seemed not worth living ! Does anyone doubt whether " pit-head baths " for miners (whether in coal or other mineral mines) are a necessity, let him or her descend into a mine and assurance will inevitably result !

CHAPTER IX

A WIDER FIELD

1908–1912

Increasing responsibilities for Women Inspectors—"Planted out"—Residence in Manchester—Work in Lancashire and Yorkshire—Textile mills—"The Half-Timer" in factory and school—Young persons and medical certificates—Adolescents in industry.

WHEN I resumed my work in the Factory Department, which I had temporarily left for the Poor Law inquiry under the Royal Commission, a scheme for making the services of the women inspectors more readily available in the chief industrial districts was already under consideration by the Home Office. This was put in force in the autumn of 1908. The Women's Branch under the Principal Lady Inspector now numbered seventeen women, and these were assigned to different parts of the United Kingdom with special duties respecting the employment of women, young persons and children. The women inspectors, while remaining a separate branch, were to fit in with the organised system of inspection by the men's staff which covered the whole country, a superintending inspector being in charge of each division, with district inspectors and their staff under him. We four senior lady inspectors were provided each with an office and staff in the

division to which we were allotted, and we and our juniors removed with our goods and chattels and took up our residence in the central town of our sphere of labour.

A large slice of industrial England came to my share in two divisions allotted to me. These included Yorkshire and Lancashire with their great textile mills ; Cheshire, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland and Durham. Here was ample work among the thousands of cotton and woollen operatives, to say nothing of all the other industries crowded into these counties. I and my four younger women inspectors were kept as busy as we could be and yet were (not unnaturally) unable to meet anything like the demands continually made upon us. There was certainly satisfaction in doing what we were able to do, but I wonder if official superiors at headquarters ever give a thought to the strain entailed on the workman in the task of cutting a coat out of insufficient cloth !

I referred in the first chapter to the difficulties inherent in an organisation which imposes a staff of women working as a separate branch under their own Woman Principal upon an established hierarchy of men with vested interests in their position and its duties. When now, after fifteen years, the members of the women's staff, having expanded and ceasing to be entirely peripatetic, were planted out, the difficulties were not overcome but assumed rather a different form. Departmental instructions defined so far as possible the line of demarca-

tion between the duties of men and women inspectors working in the same area, and insisted on co-operation in arranging and carrying out the work. These, while providing a basis of action, depended in practice on the exercise of tact and forbearance on both sides. Looking back on the system I think that, broadly speaking, it occasioned in the minds of the majority of the men a sense of irritation that a set of inspectors not subject to their direction and control (and *women* at that !) should be circulating in their districts ; to the women it caused at times a galling sense of limitation of function and of isolation from the main current of departmental practice and policy vested in the men's organisation. For my own part I count the four and a half years I was Senior Lady Inspector in the Northern Division, with headquarters in Manchester, some of the happiest and most useful in my official experience. In spite of the pain inseparable to a Southerner of banishment from London and the transference of house and home, my devoted sister and I settled in happily to life in Manchester. Nothing could exceed the friendliness we experienced in that atmospherically gloomy but socially bright and attractive city. In official life I was fortunate in my colleague, the Superintending Inspector of the Division, my old friend Mr. Bellhouse (now Sir Gerald Bellhouse and H.M. Chief Inspector of Factories). No cloud of disagreement or of friction ever came between us ; it was then as always a pleasure to work with him. Indeed, whatever may have been the views

of the men throughout the large area in which we worked as to women inspectors and their place in the scheme of factory inspection, I and my staff of women had nothing to complain of in our reception and treatment. Friendship and harmony marked our relations with our men colleagues. As to the impression created in the North of England by the coming into that great industrial centre of women inspectors specially to look after the women and girls in the factories, we had abundant evidence that it was altogether favourable. Employers and workpeople alike welcomed the step. The great textile and other trade unions immediately entered into communication with me as senior inspector, and made increasing use of us women for information as to the legal redress for grievances and for inquiry into complaints. The employers individually and through their associations also sought our advice as women in matters affecting the women workers. Social service in every form was then attracting women of all classes and of various degrees of education in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Bradford, and we of the Civil Service were eagerly consulted as " experts " on much that was agitating the awakening civic sense of women at that period.

No attempt can be made to enter into the numerous matters of interest and measures of reform which filled those strenuous years. There are, however, one or two special aspects of work in that crowded industrial area on which I will dwell briefly.

The textile industries of cotton and wool above all others grip the imagination and arouse interest. No other branch of industry—unless it be its close companion in the same localities, coal mining —so dominates a whole district. The life of the community is governed and its habits dictated by the mills. Nowhere else does the factory inspector feel himself or herself to be such a part of the whole social system as in the textile districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire. We were roused from sleep by the sound of the onward march of hundreds of wooden clogs (before sunrise during half the year); spent the days in the roar and throb of the spinning mill or weaving shed; listened in the evenings to graphic recitals of what goes on at "t' mill," piecing together reports of how "t' little lass" met with the accident, or hearing how children were "fair clemmed with the cold" in the early morning start. In the textile districts the *old* mills were in those days shockingly bad; the *new*, beginning to be erected, were in most respects excellent. Sanitation has been already referred to; the standard in textile districts was incredibly low. "Time cribbing," especially at meals, was common, and necessitated detective visits to catch the offenders. The lack of all that is now classed "welfare" was deplorable. No place for meals except the hot and steamy spinning rooms and weaving sheds. No drinking water available to quench thirst in the exhaustion of dusty and hot work. No cloakroom or means of changing clothes in privacy for either men or women, boys or girls,

who in the workrooms slipped in and out of essential garments in order to meet the necessities of passing out of overheated rooms into the cold northern air. No " first aid " for common minor injuries to hands or bare feet. Most lamentable of all, no supervision of young lads and lasses such as the welfare supervisor of a later date afforded.

A large proportion of the mill hands were little boys and girls. That was still the days of " the half-timers." The boys and girls of school age, technically " children," were in the mills in addition to the large numbers of the little people of thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen years of age, who were technically " young persons." Of these two classes who occupied so much of our time as women inspectors, I must take this opportunity to write.

To my mind a great part of the fascination of the textile mills was the children. The " half-timer " is now only an historical figure, since the employment of children of school age was prohibited by the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act, 1920. But all the time I was a factory inspector the half-time children were very much alive and were a very important part of the cotton and woollen industrial system in Lancashire and Yorkshire. When I was working in these counties the streets of the factory towns would, in the early mornings between five and six o'clock, echo with the sound of the wooden clogs on innumerable feet all hurrying towards the mills ; little lassies in their shawls and little lads in caps and mufflers running along among the grown-ups. And

in the evening between six and seven again the crowds would pour by hastening home "to their teas;" but now the little pale-faced creatures seemed to drag themselves wearily along. Within the factories, in the great spinning rooms, occupying floor above floor in the mills and running the entire length of the long building, it was a familiar sight to find the little "doffers" running about. Their work was intermittent, and the row of "doffers," in the light clothing which alone was bearable in the heat, would often be seen sitting on a wooden bench awaiting their turn. A whistle from the overlooker and they would dart off to the particular alley between the long lines of spinning frames where their services to "doff" the bobbins were needed. The periods of rest were short, and the work had to be done rapidly and skilfully with deft fingers. Overlookers for the most part were kindly men with kiddies of their own and treated the children well, but the Yorkshire or Lancashire man is a rough diamond and not endowed with abnormal patience. Complaints of brutal conduct reached me at times. I had no powers as an inspector to deal with such a matter, but where I had evidence of it I could not as a woman ignore it, and a few words to the offending overlooker were generally well received and made any reference to the employer unnecessary. On one occasion, however, I witnessed such a disgraceful attack on a little girl by a well-known bullying foreman that, after a hot remonstrance to him, I reported the scene to the head of the firm, on which he promptly took action.

My presence was unsuspected in the mill, and I was hidden by the machinery until I suddenly entered an alley and saw the child struck down and kicked. Alas, there were no welfare supervisors in those days. The " doffers " fared, on the whole, much better than in many other employments, and I cannot say that the conditions were, on the whole, unfavourable to them.

I made several special inquiries, as did the other women inspectors, into the conditions of " half-time " employment in all the different processes and industries in which child labour was common. The result of these is reported with much detail in the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories for 1907 (page 181) and for 1908 (page 153), and 1909 (pages 154–157). My personal experience of half-timers' employment is also recorded in my evidence[1] before the Departmental Committee on Half-Time. Some of the work that children were employed to do in the mills was unsuitable, such as bobbin carrying, the weights being often heavy, and the constant running to and fro and up and down stairs exhausting. The Employment of Children Act, 1903, prohibited the carrying by children of loads " so heavy as to be likely to cause injury to the child," and notwithstanding the rather vague terms of this prohibition it enabled us to secure relief in many cases. The employment of children as " tenters " in cotton weaving sheds was very common in some Lancashire towns, and was

[1] Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Partial Exemption from School Attendance, 1909.

even more trying and unsuitable than employment as " doffers " in the spinning rooms. Many of the certifying factory surgeons in the cotton and woollen districts were our allies in safeguarding the children. Each child had, of course, under the Factory Act to be examined by the certifying factory surgeon before his or her services could be retained. Although the letter of the law only required the doctor either to grant or to refuse a certificate that the child was " not incapacitated by disease or bodily infirmity from working for the time allowed by law," much more than this was often done. Many of the certifying surgeons took a great interest in the young people, and would give advice to both child and employer or manager on the means to be taken to remedy physical defects for which he had felt compelled to reject them. The surgeon was authorised in suitable cases to give a qualified certificate as to the work on which alone the child might be employed or the work he was unfit to perform. The inspectors, co-operating with the doctor in these matters, caused much suffering to be avoided. In addition we were able in some districts to establish a triumvirate by roping in the Juvenile Advisory Committees set up by the Education Authority and Labour Exchanges. This system, tentatively tried in 1908–1909 in Yorkshire, grew in importance and spread to other districts, and was applied to the care of the young persons between fourteen and sixteen years of age.

The " half-timer," as the name denotes, was only a part time worker in the mill, being also a

part time scholar compulsorily attending school either in the morning (or afternoon) six days in the week or on alternate days. The system, hedged round by an elaborate arrangement of school attendance certificates, gave less trouble than might have been expected, entailing as it did watchfulness on the part of teacher, employer and inspector. Of course there were evasions: the children played truant, the parents wangled employment and school times, the employer dodged teacher and inspector by having the children in illegally after or before the requisite school attendance, but prosecutions in flagrant cases kept the evasions within bounds.

My certificate of appointment, quoted on page 33, included authority to " visit and inspect schools " in which half-timers were educated—being no longer necessary, this has now disappeared from inspectors' certificates. When I was in Yorkshire and Lancashire I frequently visited the schools to make inquiries about individual children. Two things struck me forcibly. One was the amazing knowledge of and interest in each scholar taken by the master or mistress. Often I spent a most interesting and, I think, useful time in discussing the circumstances of individual half-timers with their teachers. The other was the futility, and in some instances I might almost say cruelty, of the system which drove little weary factory workers after a morning in the mill to spend an afternoon in the school class. I hardly knew which to pity most, the teacher or the pupil; the one earnestly

striving to interest and impress the lesson upon the other, listless, exhausted, heavy with sleep. The memory of one hot afternoon comes to me—the drowsy, not over-clean children in a crowded class-room whom I had seen in the morning rushing to and fro literally sweating in the spinning room —the strident voice of a weary teacher shouting at the large class. The questions being put were: "Why do we eat melted butter with our fish?" "Why do we have horseradish with beef?" It was presumably a lesson on food values. Poor children, they neither ate those properly constituted dishes themselves, nor cared why others should be expected to do so!

The children of school age have now disappeared from factories and workshops, but the "young person" who has just left school, the boy or girl between 14 and 16, is still employed there. It is estimated that over 300,000 boys and girls leave school every year. A considerable proportion of these at once enter our factories and workshops. Immediately they do so they are reckoned, so far as the Factory Act is concerned, to be equal to the strain of the full working hours allowed for an adult woman. These include a 12 hour day (10½ hours in textile factories), inclusive of meals, and on Saturdays eight hours (textile factories 7½ hours), inclusive of meals. Previous to the war even boys and girls aged 13, if released from school by the local Education Authority, could legally be employed these hours. Even overtime in excess of these hours was permissible for the

young persons until the Factory Act of 1895 prohibited it. This was a reform earnestly pleaded for and welcomed not least by the women inspectors.

The care of juvenile operatives has naturally been from the first a special duty of the Women's Branch of the Inspectorate: not confined to girls (although to these primarily), but extending to boys when these were employed in industries not restricted to the male sex. With the fusion of the staff of men and women inspectors in 1921 has come the opportunity for women to espouse the cause of the boys employed in men's industries, such as the big iron and steel works, where formerly no woman set foot. I have seen in one way or another enough of the conditions of employment of boys in such industries to make me welcome this extension of woman's responsibility to the State. This enlargement of the woman inspector's field of operations enables the Home Office to bring to its aid in solving questions concerning boys' labour the woman's power of observation and her mother-sense in combination with the judgment of the trained and disciplined Civil Servant. Neither man alone nor woman alone can adequately deal with the complex subject of juvenile labour which still awaits further solution. Together they should be able to forge out a reasonable system of industrial employment for the young person. The many queries which arise with reference to the vexed question of the proper hours of employment for young persons would be easier to deal with if we were to separate for that purpose the youngster

aged 14 to 16 from the youths and maidens aged 16 and over. Experience and common sense lead us to recognise, while we cannot perhaps define it, a distinction between the normal young man or young woman of 16 to 18 and the boy or girl of 14 to 16, and yet in legislating for their hours of employment it is ignored. Our legislators have, however, made some very definite distinctions in other cases. For example, the Education Acts provide for free "Higher Education" up to 16 years of age. Compulsory attendance at special schools of physical defectives extends to 16 years, as does also detention of delinquent boys and girls at industrial schools. Young persons under 16 are at present not insurable under either the National Health or Unemployment Insurance Acts. Neither are young persons under 16 eligible for membership of a trade union. In one or two respects our factory code already distinguishes between young persons under 16 and those of 16 and over. The medical examination of young persons entering factories is compulsory up to the age of 16. Night work which is normally prohibited for young persons is allowed in certain processes and under certain conditions to lads of 16 and over. Employment in two shifts when permissible for women is also allowed to young persons of 16 and over. Why, then, when the opportunity is offered by an amending Factories Bill should not a like distinction be made as regards hours of labour?

The reports of the inspectors are full of instances

of the exploitation of young persons and of complaints of the strain of over-long hours of employment, especially in hot and heavy work. The strain is often occasioned by working the full hours allowed by the present Act, and the evidence has been accumulating for years that a day of ten working hours and a week of 60 hours (exclusive of meal times), should not be allowed in the case of the adolescent boy or girl. For young people just released from school at 14 years of age the full period allowed by law in factory or workshop makes an unreasonable demand on their whole being. While it may not be practicable or indeed desirable to prohibit industrial employment of boys and girls under 16, it is both practicable and desirable to place a stricter limit on their hours of work. This might well provide for an ascending scale commencing, say, at half time at 14, and gradually increasing up to a maximum of eight hours on attaining 16 years. If the employment of young persons under 16 could also be made contingent on their attendance at educational classes for at least two hours daily the benefit would be great. Too often the child released from school at 14 slips back quickly into a state below that of a normal school child of ten. Boys of 17 who have passed through and out of our education system at 14 have been found to be unable to read or write more than their name.

The medical examination of young persons on entering a factory has been required under the Factory Act for 80 years, and is a most important

and beneficial enactment. The system as laid down by the Act has unfortunately not kept pace with the advance in medical science and practice, and is altogether out of date. This has long been recognised by those best acquainted with it, and was made abundantly clear to the Home Office Committee on the Medical Examination of Young Persons appointed in 1924, of which Mr. Rhys Davies, Parliamentary Under Secretary during the Labour Government's administration, was chairman and I secretary. I and other inspectors had good cause to know the defects of the system, as also its failure to secure more than a perfunctory performance of the prescribed duties from the medical practitioners, who, while accepting the duty of certifying factory surgeon, cared nothing for the opportunity it afforded of rendering real service to the rising generation. What medical examination of young industrial workers might mean under a good system has been demonstrated by zealous certifying surgeons here and there throughout my experience. The Committee, therefore, had examples and evidence in plenty both of the faults of the present system and the way in which it could be replaced by a good one. Since the factory medical examination had been set up the whole scheme of school medical examination had come into being. The complete system of medical examination of the school child linked on with the medical care of the infant welfare system now covers the individual from birth to leaving school. The National Health Insurance picks him

and her up again from the age of 16 till death ends the story. The gap from leaving school at 14 to becoming insurable at 16 is unfilled except by the medical examination at the factory or workshop of those about to enter industry. The Committee in their report urged the importance of adequately filling the gap, and towards this end made recommendations for amending the law. Among other reforms of great importance, the Committee proposed that the medical record of the school child should be available for the certifying surgeon who examines him in the factory. It was proposed by the Labour Government in 1924 to give effect to the Committee's proposals in the Factory Bill which was published that year just before it went out of office, and a similar amendment is included in the present Government's Bill. The whole subject of the adolescent in industry is too vast to enter into here—much has been published on the need for reform, there is no lack of facts collected and available for consideration; but the country has as yet no clear lead dealing with all aspects of the problem.

CHAPTER X

AT HEADQUARTERS AGAIN

1912–1914

Promotion—Oversight of women's work for women—Some special subjects—Machinery accidents and fencing—Outworkers—Sweated industries—War Office sub-contractors—Charitable institutions—Theatre workrooms—Fishcuring—The Shetland Islands—Conferences—Employers and workers.

EARLY in 1912 I left Manchester and returned to London on promotion as Deputy Principal Lady Inspector of Factories. I was established at the Home Office with the work also of Senior Lady Inspector in charge of the women's staff in London and the Home Counties. My duties as deputy in addition to my divisional duties gave me the oversight of all the work being done by the women inspectors throughout the country. This enabled me, in association with Miss Adelaide Anderson, the Principal Lady Inspector, to survey the whole field and direct investigations covering all districts. Of the two most strenuous years in which Miss Anderson and I worked happily together in the Home Office, directing and shaping the activities of a zealous and hard-working staff of women, much of interest might be recorded, but in the full noontide of our work the war cloud settled down upon the world and threw into

shadow all that immediately preceded August, 1914. Before passing on to some memories of the war period, I will select for mention in this chapter one or two of the matters which occupied my attention both in supervising the work of others and in carrying out investigations myself. First in importance is the subject of industrial accidents. This has been reserved for mention in this Chapter because it is so much an ever-present concern of the whole Factory Department that any reference to it would be out of focus elsewhere than in connection with a wide outlook over the whole country.

The high rate of accidents in factories has been a matter of anxiety to the Factory Department throughout the last thirty years, to go back no further. In no direction has the whole inspectorate been more active than in the constant endeavour to reduce the risks to life and limb to which the factory worker is exposed. But for the Department's vigilance the figures, serious as they are, must have been immeasurably greater, seeing how great has been the increase in the use of machinery and in the number of persons employed in industry in the last few years.

Accidents occurring in a factory or workshop are required by law to be notified to the inspector in charge of the district, and it is due to the information thus placed in his hands and the opportunity afforded to him of making full investigation immediately on the spot, that measures for preventing accidents have been devised and carried out. The

fencing of machinery has grown from small experimental beginnings into a highly technical science, through the constant study of the problem of how to safeguard the worker without interfering with the action of the machine, and in this progress is due in large measure to the patient, persistent investigation of individual cases of accident. The prosecution of offenders has had an altogether salutary effect, not only as a warning to others, but as a means of stimulating the interest of makers and users in safeguarding particular types of machinery.

The greater peril from severe accidents is associated with docks, shipbuilding construction, and the heavy iron and steel industries where men only are employed, but some of the women's lighter trades are by no means exempt from serious risk. For example, the laundry industry, which, as I have already described, changed in a few years from the "hand laundry" to the "steam laundry," soon began its terrible tale of maimed girls. The women inspectors made a special study of the safeguarding of the machines which more and more superseded the ironing and washing of clothes by hand. The shirt and collar ironing and polishing machines with their intaking rollers, and the steam-heated cylinders of the calenders for ironing large tablecloths and sheets, have grown during my experience in number, complexity and size, becoming ever more and more dangerous. At the present day these and other machines in ordinary use are provided with efficient guards which automatically

stop the machine before injury is done.[1] Formerly little girls were usually set to feed or to clean such machines, often without any training or supervision. Their thin hands would be nipped in the rapidly-revolving rollers and arms would be drawn in by the relentless machine before its motion could be arrested. Not infrequently the poor little victim was held tight in the grip of the heated rollers while expert assistance was procured and screws and nuts loosened before the pressure was relieved. Terrible injuries by crushing and burning resulted, and the girls, after prolonged suffering, were maimed for life. Many were the prosecutions I have conducted of employers whose culpable negligence had caused such serious injuries.

Power-presses for stamping out the metal in tin-box factories were also a cause of severe accidents. Here, again, the operators were young girls, the trade being a proverbially "sweated" one in the days when I spent so much of my time in these factories, before Trade Boards were known. The safeguarding of these presses presented a problem which has only of recent years been solved.[2]

Another fruitful source of accidents to women and girls which it was my lot frequently to investigate was the unguarded main shaft driving sewing machines in clothing factories. These long shafts pass under the benches on which the sewing

[1] Safety Pamphlet, No. 11. Fencing for Laundry Machinery, 1926. Stationery Office, Kingsway, W.C.2. Price 1s. 3d.

[2] Safety Pamphlet, No. 9. Fencing for Power Presses. Stationery Office. Price 1s. 6d.

machines stand and are a few inches above the floor. Very commonly only a slight rail fenced off this smooth, rapidly-revolving shaft, and when, as often happened, the strap driving the sewing machines slipped off the wheel connected with the shaft, the girl would stoop down and adjust it. Loose hair would be caught in a second and lapped round the shaft, and severe injury would result. Scalping accidents were not uncommon when shafting of this description was within reach and was not securely fenced; the hair once caught on the shaft, the whole scalp would be torn from the head in a second. One such case I well remember where the girl, only fifteen years of age, had been so caught on a shaft and lost the scalp and most of the skin of her face. She lay in the London Hospital for three months and then died. Everything that skill could devise had been done for her, and the whole staff of the hospital had been devoted to her. I have seen how changes of fashion in hairdressing have caused the point of danger to women in factories to shift from one part of machinery to another. Before welfare supervisors came into the factories to advise the girls how to manage their dress and hair, we women inspectors had to deal tactfully with it. The wearing of caps and trousers made for additional safety when women did men's work during the war. "Bobbed" hair and the "Eton crop" have come into fashion since my inspecting days. Doubtless this fashion makes for the greater security of women among machinery.

The " Safety First " movement,[1] by drawing the attention of workers, both men and women, to the need for care and thought in order to avoid unnecessary danger to themselves and others, has done great service. Yet when all is said and done, the chief responsibility rests with the employer in eliminating causes of accidents, and his great ally in this is the factory inspector. When the vast amount of suffering and sorrow entailed by an accident, whether fatal or not, is so vividly brought home to the inspector by every case investigated, is it surprising if he or she cannot rest until all possible means of prevention have been exhausted ? Such experiences sharpen the powers of observation, and vigilance is never relaxed during an inspection lest any source of danger be overlooked. Step by step the danger-points of machinery in ordinary use have been tracked down, and by consultation with the four parties concerned these have been, so far as practicable, guarded or rendered harmless by improved construction. By the four parties concerned I mean the maker of the machine, the occupier of the factory, the worker, and the factory inspector. These I have seen in my time drawn more and more into co-operation as industry after industry has come under closer scrutiny from the safety standpoint. The daily experience of all the factory inspectors is continually adding to the sum of knowledge, and great results may be anticipated from the practice of the Department in making this available for general

[1] The Safety First Council, 119 Victoria Street, S.W.1.

use through the medium of illustrated pamphlets. "Publicity" is one of the striking developments of recent years in Government Departments, and when so used it has far-reaching possibilities for the future.

Of the dangers in aerated water works from the flying particles of glass caused by the explosion of bottles filled under pressure, I need not write. The investigation of such accidents and of the means of safeguarding the women occupied much of my attention during many years. The trade is subject to Regulations, and the risks have been greatly reduced by a strict enforcement of the rules, somewhat irksome as they are to the workers, who have to wear special masks and hand and arm protectors. I described the conditions under which the work is carried on in 1902, in the chapter I contributed to "Dangerous Trades."[1]

I must now say something about another subject of concern to the whole Department, but in which the women's branch have done a vast amount of work: namely, outwork. While all have taken their share, I doubt if any other factory inspector has done quite so much visiting among the home workers as I have! I know many of my women colleagues must have run me pretty close, but I doubt if even they have tramped the mean streets of so many towns and ascended so many flights of rickety and unsavoury stairs in slum-land. As I look back over the many industries and many

[1] "Dangerous Trades," edited by Sir Thomas Oliver, 1902 edition, Chapter L., "Women's Labour in Aerated Water Works," by Rose E. Squire.

districts in which I have studied the outwork problem, and in which I received fresh shocks at the sweated wages which employers dared to give and women patiently received, I recall particularly whole areas of London, Leeds and Bristol as types of "home work" degraded to its lowest depth. Of the smaller towns, I ask myself afresh why cathedral cities should be pre-eminently bad! I have seen some of the worst slums and the greatest poverty and degradation in these, where the glory of the cathedral church should have raised the level of all life. Has this disgrace altogether disappeared in the intervening years which have seen so much improvement in the lot of the home worker? I do not know.—If I were asked to describe in a few words what were the chief evils of the outwork system, and what claim it can now make to be continued in spite of much popular outcry against it, I should say that the evils were included in the colloquial term "sweating," and that they have been, if not removed altogether, at least very greatly diminished by the Trade Boards. For the conditions with which I became so familiar I must be content to refer to the Report of the Home Work Committee of 1907, and for details to my own evidence before that Committee.[1] I will only give one or two typical examples.

A young widow of a Woolwich Arsenal labourer, with two children aged two and eight years, was found making shirts at 8¾d. a dozen. She could do

[1] Report of the Select Committee on Home Work 1907. Minutes of Evidence, pages 21 and 51.

three dozen a day by sitting at it. For some of the shirts she was only paid 6d. and 7¾d. a dozen. The week of my visit she had made 40 shirts between Tuesday evening and Thursday morning. The cotton used cost her 4d. a reel, sufficient to stitch three dozen shirts. Another case: Two sisters were working together in a top attic making cardboard boxes at one shilling a gross. The previous week they had made four gross and earned 4s. 6d. Match boxes are paid 2½d. a gross, and the paste and string costs 1¾d. for every seven gross made. Again: Brush makers in London, Leeds, Bristol, Birmingham, Worcester and Wells were paid from 5d. to 6½d. per 1,000 "knots"—that is the tufts of bristle drawn by hand by wire through the holes in the wooden backs and knotted. Fur pulling was perhaps the dirtiest and worst paid of all home industries. This industry I described in "Dangerous Trades," in 1902.[1] Sorting dried peas was perhaps the most monotonous occupation; and as the peas were sold in packets for eating, the hand sorting in living rooms, sometimes by consumptives, was not an appetising process. Glove making, although poorly paid, was by reason of the skill required done under fairly good conditions in Somerset.

In Worcester and in Birmingham I have vivid pictures in my mind of whole families seated round a table with a lamp in the centre, late in the evening, putting clips on gloves in the one case, and sewing

[1] "Dangerous Trades," edited by Sir Thomas Oliver, 1902 edition, Chapter LIII., "Rabbit Down," by Rose E. Squire.

hooks and eyes on cards in the other. In this and other kinds of simple work I have been amazed to see how nimble the little fingers of tiny children were.

With the low wages paid, the factory inspector was not officially concerned, nor with the hours worked; the law which we had to enforce was that requiring written particulars of the rate of wages to be furnished to the workers "to enable them to compute the amount payable" (a very necessary prevention against fraudulent or careless methods of payment). Also the Truck Acts, of which I have written in Chapter VI. Every employer of outworkers is required by the Factory Act to keep a list of their names and addresses, and this is available both for the factory inspector and the officers of the local authority, who are responsible for the sanitary condition of the premises. The number of outworkers in the clothing and some other trades has in the past been very great. During the war enormous quantities of clothing for the troops and of camp equipment, such, for instance, as canvas water buckets, was done by outworkers, in general unknown to the War Office and Admiralty. The contractors found their factories and workshops unable to cope with the huge orders they received and gave parts of them to lesser men, who for the same reason handed on some part to others. It was at one time my job to trace these sub-contractors, and by one means and another we got track of the people to whom in succession the work was distributed. As

we pursued the articles from street to street we got into a lower and lower stratum of society, until, finally, we reached homes in a condition which necessitated calling in the sanitary authority lest the soldiers for whom the things were destined should suffer. In some cases we traced the goods through fourteen or fifteen different hands, each sub-contractor in farming out the work keeping something off the price for himself. It was at least some satisfaction to get much of this evil righted on the Home Office taking the matter up with the War Office.

I have dwelt on the evils of the outwork system, much of which is happily a thing of the past. On the other side I must say a word in its favour if properly safeguarded. The outworker's home, when the work as well as the premises are clean and wholesome and the labour is properly paid, can be a very happy and delightful place, as I well know. It is a great boon to many persons to be able to sit at home and earn their living. The young mother with her children, the wife with an invalid husband, the daughter and her aged or invalid mother, two sisters living together—these and similar instances in the case of men readily occur to the mind. We do not willingly in Great Britain interfere with the natural desire of individuals to live and work at home, or coerce everyone to take their labour into a factory.

In two other directions outside the normal inspection of factories and workshops special work in regard to women has been laid upon the women inspectors, *i.e.*, charitable institutions and theatres.

A considerable amount of industrial work is carried on by charitable institutions whose object is the care of women and girls. Laundry work is the chief form of such industrial enterprise, but needlework and, to a small extent, weaving and other handicrafts are pursued. The laundries carried on by the charitable and reformatory institutions are of every variety of size and equipment, from the fine steam laundries run by convents to the little hand laundries of the small "Homes." Such institutions in most cases derive the chief part of their income from their laundries, the turnover in some instances being very considerable. Except for those employed in management and supervision, the employees are the "inmates" of the institution. These render service in the laundry or workroom in exchange for board and lodging, and are not in receipt of wages. The work is regarded as part of the training and discipline of the Home and as an important element in the reformation of character. The women and girls —a large proportion are young persons under eighteen—are, for the most part, placed in these homes on account of some offence against morality or the law. Some are "preventive" cases sent to these institutions to save them from the demoralising influence of bad homes and bad companions. The mere fact that industrial work is carried on does not cause such charitable institutions to be technically either factories or workshops, but they are none the less subject, so far as that part of the premises is concerned, to special

regulation and inspection, charitable institutions of this character having been brought within the scope of factory legislation by the Factory Act of 1907. Great opposition was aroused by the inclusion of laundries carried on in convents and other religious and charitable institutions in the Bill, especially on behalf of the Irish Roman Catholics. The original provisions were modified to meet the most important objections, particularly as regards greater elasticity in the hours of work and restriction of the powers of inspectors to question the inmates. The whole idea of inspection was abhorrent to the managers of these institutions, and the fact that such inspection was to be limited strictly to the industrial part of the premises, and that under women inspectors, did not altogether allay the fears of Sisterhoods.

I claim that the history of these charitable institutions in relation to statutory regulation and government inspection is a striking instance in support of my view. It is the human relationship established between those engaged in this rescue and preventive work and the inspectors which more than anything else has overcome the old resentment to " Government interference." Women interested in the reformation and well-being of the class of women gathered into these institutions have met as inspector and inspected, and found in a mutual interest a point of contact which in time obliterated all resentment and prejudice. Gradually the benefits of shorter hours have been recognised, affording opportunity for recreation, for music

and for physical drill, thus producing a marked change in the inmates. Depression, nervous irritability and insubordination gave place to more normal healthy life. Cloistered nuns, severe Anglican deaconesses, harassed matrons of strict Protestant homes, all by degrees, as they came to know the lady inspector, opened out and were anxious to learn of other methods of conducting industrial work in similar institutions and in commercial undertakings in the world. The effect of shorter hours, or frequent pauses, the better conditions obtained by screening the hot ironing stoves from the room or draining wash-house floors, labour-saving machinery, fencing of dangerous machines—all these and many other matters were discussed and gradually adopted as knowledge of higher standards spread. The dreariness of rescue and preventive homes as we knew them, when first brought under the Factory Act and open to our inspection, passes description. A few clung to old methods for many years, but the majority changed for the better more quickly. The idea that naughty girls or "fallen women" could only be kept out of mischief by a life of perpetual work within four walls, with intervals for meals and religious exercises, was prevalent, and is reflected in the schemes of hours which were submitted to the Home Office for approval. The worst examples were ruled out as being beyond even the generous allowance permitted by the Act (at the earnest plea of the managers when the Bill was passing through Parliament). But the long list of schemes

which were sanctioned in 1908 shows in most instances laundry work commencing daily at 7 or 7.30 a.m. and ending, except on Saturdays, at 8 or 8.30 p.m., with intervals for meals and sometimes for religious services. Step by step these "schemes" have been cancelled by request of the management, and first of all the twelve-hour day allowed in trade laundries, and then shorter hours, have taken their place.

The worst examples of dreary Homes, where all that is bright and healthy seemed to be rigorously excluded in the stern discipline supposed to be suitable for reformation of character, were those managed by committees consisting of men only. These were old gentlemen with long grey beards and long faces, who no doubt meant well but had no ideas beyond subduing evil by repression of all natural inclinations. It seems monstrous that no woman should be on these committees. I succeeded in persuading some of them to see me in order that I might bring before them personally the matters which needed reform. I think they entirely disapproved of so unnatural an innovation as a *woman* Government official, but little by little improvements were made. In one bleak building, cold and draughty in the long northern winter, a large number of quite young girls worked all day in an evil-smelling half-basement laundry; they never went out beyond the walled yard except to walk to church on Sundays and one evening in the week. Their pinched and dull faces made one's heart ache, and their dress added to their miserable

appearance, for it consisted of a shapeless garment made of odd pieces of various materials sewn together—a device of the old gentlemen to check any vanity in their charges ! In contrast to these were the Homes of the Roman Catholic convents and the Salvation Army—extremes meet, and these very different religious bodies displayed a more human sympathy with distressed womanhood than most of the others. A dear old Reverend Mother Superior once said to me, " My dear, we encourage our penitents always to look forward and never to look back." This was in explanation of the shortened hours of laundry work to allow twice a week of some little festivity—" even if it is only dressing up in fancy clothes for supper." It was here that I found one day a rehearsal in progress of a play to be performed by the girls on Sunday, at which the Bishop of the diocese was to be present. The excitement was intense ; even the nuns acting as producer and prompter were quietly infected by it !

In one way or another, to the best of their ability and according to their lights, devoted women, whatever their religious views, are striving to help these unfortunate girls. No one would wish to place any impediment in their way or increase their burden by vexatious outside interference or needless legislation. I think, however, that the best and most enlightened of them welcome the necessity of conforming to a well-thought-out general standard, and are glad to receive visits from expert inspectors from Government Depart-

ments concerned. As regards the industrial side of these institutions there seems to be no reason why the " inmates " employed in such work should not receive from the State the same protection as regards health and safety as persons who do similar work for wages elsewhere. Special treatment is, I believe, generally recognised as no longer necessary as regards industrial enterprise carried on by a charitable institution.

I pass now to a very different class of institution —the theatre. The women inspectors made special inquiries from time to time in theatres in London and the chief provincial towns, and had to visit the workrooms where the wardrobes of the performers were altered or repaired. A rush of work would precede the introduction of a pantomime or a new " revue," and the needlewomen would be employed overtime, not infrequently illegally. At another time the Home Office desired special information respecting safety in case of fire in the workrooms and dressing rooms of theatres. During such an inquiry I learnt a great deal about the quite remarkable care taken to render non-inflammatory not only the flimsy materials of ballet and other costumes, but also the properties and stage accessories, such as imitation grass and flowers. My entry by the stage door and up the narrow stairs, led me to the rooms, varying from the dressing-rooms of " stars " to the barrack-like attics where crowds of girl " supers " scrambled as best they could for clothes, and for a corner of looking-glass in which to put on effective rouge and powder. They

were a merry crew, and my visits seemed to be very welcome. Sometimes I met strange beings on the stairs at pantomime times—ogres and hobgoblins, and once I remember encountering a very large cat, his tail over his arm, racing up two steps at a time. I was only by luck saved from appearing on one occasion on the stage during a performance! I had, on completing my visit to some dressing-rooms at a provincial theatre, lost my way, and, having crossed the stage under proper escort when I had arrived some time previously, I thought to do so on my way out. Only when I was about to emerge from the wings did I notice that the stage was occupied and the play in progress. I beat a hasty retreat and was laughingly told that a laundry man in similar circumstances, with a basket on his shoulder, had actually appeared on the stage while a play was proceeding a few days previously, to the delight of the audience and his own discomfiture.

A pleasant interlude in the work at headquarters was afforded me in 1913 by an expedition to the North of Scotland and the Shetland Islands, in the interests of the girls employed in herring curing. The Factory Department had for many years striven with more or less success to ameliorate the worst conditions of the fish-curing industry. The perishable nature of the herring necessitated the work of gutting and salting the fish being carried out immediately on the arrival of the fishing boats, and, therefore, the women and girls employed were exempt from the restrictions as to hours and meal

times imposed on other industries by the Factory Act. The industry of herring curing had grown enormously with the increased facilities for catching and landing the fish promptly, which followed the substitution of steam trawlers for sailing boats.

The Scotch curers, with their staff of women and girls recruited from the Hebrides, the Highlands and other parts of Scotland, followed the herring round the coast, starting with the early summer fishing in the Hebrides and working round by the Shetland Islands, the north coast of Scotland, down the east coast of England to Yarmouth and Lowestoft, where the curing season ended before Christmas. The Scotch lassies in hundreds, brawny and bonnie, with deft fingers carried out their task of gutting the herring in the open on plots adjoining the landing-places of the boats, and were lodged in the Scotch fishing on the ground in huts. Directly the boats were sighted the signal would go round, the girls would assemble on the plots, and immediately the fish was landed the work would commence, and often continue late into the night. If it was a heavy catch the busy workers snatched a few moments for meals and relieved each other for a few hours' rest, while the work went on unceasingly. The constant strain of emergency work lasting for seven or eight months every year made a heavy demand even on the robust Scotch girls, and its effects were specially seen when it came to the bleak cold days of autumn and winter in Yarmouth and Lowestoft. In the summer of 1913 it was decided that the time had come to endeavour to regulate

the hours and conditions by agreement with the employers, on the lines which close acquaintance with the industry obtained by the inspectors during many years had indicated. Accordingly, a conference was held. It was arranged that this should take place for the convenience of the curers on three dates in three chief centres, where they were gathered together, namely Lerwick in the Shetland Islands, Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

I journeyed with Mr. W. Williams, Superintending Inspector, and the District Inspector concerned to Aberdeen, and thence by a small steamer to Lerwick. It was a beautiful still June day, and the deck of the steamer, except for a portion railed off for our small party of first-class passengers, was crowded with little Scotch sheep ; the odour, even on the open sea, was almost intolerable. Suddenly off the Orkneys a dense fog fell on us ; for hours we lay still, not daring to move, our siren sounding at intervals, and occasionally a trawling vessel mysteriously loomed up close beside us, and those on board the two vessels shouted, asking each other as to their whereabouts. At last the fog lifted as suddenly as it had come, and thankful to have escaped the great jagged rocks which we then saw to be so near us, we continued our journey to the picturesque port of Lerwick.

The day following being Sunday and no fishing being allowed on the Sabbath, the harbour was crowded with fishing boats, the gay colours of the Dutch craft making a brilliant picture in the summer sunshine. I then, and for several days, spent many

delightful hours among the herring girls, talking with those who were resting in their huts, or working at the gutting troughs or "farlanes." I also met the curers at the quay or in the market where they congregated. A personal invitation to each and all to attend the conferences, with the opportunity this afforded for sounding both sides as to their views, had more effect in creating interest than the printed notices and agenda which we had officially circulated. The idea of attending a conference to meet their employers was entirely new to the girls and filled them with terror, more especially when they grasped the revolutionary suggestion that they should take part in the discussion and express their own views. Gradually as the idea sank in, they became quite eager, but when the eventful day came I learnt in time that many were faint-hearted and dared not come, so I chartered large vehicles of a strange description and drove round to their hut encampments and collected and brought them into the town. To add to my difficulty, many were in bed, thinking in this way to escape me should I send for them, but I encouraged them to make a rapid toilet at which I assisted, and so by a series of journeys a substantial third party to the conference was secured. When the time came the girls voiced their wishes and supported their case bravely, and we of the Factory Department who presided had the satisfaction, both at Lerwick and later at the other centres, of securing an agreement. This restricted the hours within reasonable limits and also secured certain

sanitary and other improvements for the health and welfare of the workers. These voluntary agreements still hold the field. Conditions were further improved in some other respects in 1920, by a statutory Welfare Order for herring-curing in Norfolk and Suffolk, and this has now been followed by a Welfare Order for Scotland which will come into force this summer in which I write. Thus, progress has been made step by step in the regulation of an industry which is abnormal and specially difficult to deal with.

CHAPTER XI

WAR AND WELFARE

1914–1918

Immediate effect of the War on industry—"Business as usual"—Change-over to munitions—Factory Inspectors in War time—Women as substitutes for men—Factories working night and day—Sunday work—Problems of increased production—Welfare—Home Office welfare orders—Ministry of Munitions—"Health of Munition Workers Committee"—Appointment as Director of Women's Welfare—Arrangements for women's welfare inside and outside the works—Children of munition workers.

SUDDENLY, as a thief in the night, came the Great War. In the full tide of busy official activities, engrossed in the day-to-day direction of the women inspectors' work, it came upon me as it came upon others, changing as in a moment the outlook on life, upsetting all values. Prosecutions of employers for illegal employment of women and girls were as usual in hand, investigations into conditions in certain trades and processes were on foot, carefully laid plans for fresh developments of the work were about to be put into practice—all ceased to be of any consequence and collapsed utterly on August 4th, 1914. It was for the Factory Department as if a sponge had wiped off the slate all that was written there, and no one knew what to write in its place. The South African War had come and gone between 1899 and

1902, affecting my work, and that of my Department, in some measure by temporarily deflecting the course of industry into this or that new channel, and depriving the staff of an officer here and there; but the main current of the inspector's life went on as before. Here, however, was something which from the first moment was recognised to be quite different from anything experienced before, something which would shake life to its foundation and might turn the world upside down. Not that at first the civil population could see to what extent it would be involved, or even know how to order itself in relation to its manifold occupations and commitments. Those early days presented to a factory inspector's eyes the spectacle of bewildered employers and workers, not knowing whether to "carry on" or to cease work. Knots of women and girls stood outside their factories and workshops uncertain whether to go in or not—some employers, managers and foremen had at once been called up, others wondered whether their duty would be to stay or to go. Normal inspection was, of course, at the beginning of that period out of the question, but we found our official visits so welcome that we sent the women inspectors on their rounds. The effect of the inspector's appearance "as usual" was to steady the women workers, and to enable employers to keep a certain amount of work going on until the needs of the nation under emergency conditions became known. Much adverse criticism was later levelled against the slogan that went round the City and spread to other com-

mercial centres—" Business as usual," but some of us know that it acted as a wholesome sedative at the time and prevented panic in the first days of unsettlement. The " turn over " from peace-time industries to the making of military equipment and munitions, which took place as necessity arose, could not have been accomplished with such remarkable results if the factories had not been carried on as going concerns during this early period.

The marvellous transformation in industry which took place during the war unfolds itself to my mind in retrospect from the vantage ground of an official concerned with it in all its stages. The Factory Department Staff were from the first pressed into the service of the military and naval authorities to facilitate the supply of arms, ammunition, clothing and equipment for the troops. Who but the men and women of the Inspectorate knew where materials were to be found, where machinery and plant suitable for mass production, where trained and disciplined staffs of workers ? At a later stage, when men enlisted in large numbers for military service or were called up, and women substitutes had to be employed, another stage of the inspectors' warwork was entered upon. Again their aid was required when increased output of munitions and equipment was called for and larger and ever larger production was necessary to meet the military and naval demands. Factories multiplied, numbers of workers increased, women and girls, youths and boys, thronged into " munitions " from all classes

of society and with very varying physical and mental capabilities. Day and night the factories went on, and shift succeeded shift. The safety, health, and welfare of all these people had to be arranged for and watched over, and the factory inspectors were responsible. Yet so great was the demand for the services elsewhere of the Home Office staff of trained and experienced men that by 1915, 35 inspectors and six clerks from the Central Office had been lent to other Departments. By 1916, 43 inspectors were doing essential service elsewhere, and 45 were serving in H.M. Forces.

I quote from the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, 1917, as follows: "The knowledge and experience of industrial life and processes gained in the ordinary course of their duties had placed our staff in the position of rendering valuable service to various Government Departments engaged in providing the men and materials for carrying on the war, and assistance in this direction has again been freely given during 1917, both by the temporary loan of certain inspectors and by information supplied by others."

We women inspectors of factories were meanwhile carrying on the main work of the Factory Department, with the assistance of women temporarily brought in to join our ranks for the period of the war. Excellently these temporary recruits did their work, but the necessary training of these officers, which devolved upon us of the permanent staff, must not be forgotten, as it added considerably to the war work falling to our share!

In the summer of 1915 I was called to preliminary conferences with officers of the newly-formed Ministry of Munitions, with reference to the possibility of enlisting the services of women in engineering and other processes in the making of ammunition previously restricted to men. In September of that year the "Health of Munition Workers Committee" was set up by the Minister of Munitions, Mr. Lloyd George, in conjunction with the Home Office, under the chairmanship of Sir George Newman. I was appointed a member of the Committee, and my colleagues were Sir Gerald Bellhouse, then Deputy Chief Inspector of Factories, Mrs. H. J. Tennant, Sir Thomas Barlow, Dr. A. E. Boycott, Mr. J. R. Clynes, M.P., Dr. E. L. Collis, Sir W. M. Fletcher, Mr. Leonard Hill and Mr. S. Osborn. Our terms of reference were: "To consider and advise on questions of industrial fatigue, hours of labour, and other matters affecting the personal health and physical efficiency of workers in munition factories and workshops."

The work we were called together to do was urgent. This was no time for lengthy deliberation or prolonged scientific investigation. The problem of how to increase the production of munitions and equipment for our troops and at the same time preserve the health and safety of the workers and promote their physical and moral welfare was growing daily more acute. The evils of long hours, night work and Sunday work were imposed on women and boys and girls by employers under

pressure from the military authority to produce goods in greater and greater quantities to meet urgent calls from the front. The absence of facilities for feeding the vast numbers congregated in the works; the need for protection against poisoning and explosion in the manufacture of explosives or filling of shells; the supervision of young persons; arrangements for the care of the infants and little children of the hosts of married women employed—these and many other matters arising out of the exceptional circumstances awaited the investigation and recommendations of the Committee. No more appropriate chairman could have been chosen for the work before us—his knowledge, his zeal, his brisk manner and unfailing courtesy and charm inspired and hustled his team. We did work! It was not a case of waiting to issue a report when our labours were completed. One by one, as the chief points for our consideration were dealt with, we issued a report on that particular subject, which was immediately printed, published and circulated to all the munition factories, officials and others concerned. Twenty-one of these White Papers were issued by the Committee between 1915 and 1918, and the substance of them was incorporated in our interim and final reports published in 1917 and 1918.[1]

Our recommendations represented the views of the Home Office and the Ministry of Munitions, and were enforced in all national munition factories.

[1] Ministry of Munitions. Health of Munition Workers Committee Interim Report, 1917, Cd. 8511. Final Report, 1918, Cd. 9065.

Pressure was also brought to bear upon all factories controlled by the Ministry and others engaged on War Office and Admiralty contracts, whether for ammunition and guns or for clothing and camp equipment. The Home Office, in virtue of its emergency powers under Section 150 of the Factory Act, 1901, issued orders relaxing the provisions respecting hours of employment in factories and workshops engaged on munitions and other war work. Step by step the Home Secretary restricted within limits recommended by the Health of Munition Workers Committee, and based on the factory inspectors' reports, the hours of women and young persons by means of emergency orders. These were first applied to individual factories and then, as experience was gained, to whole classes of factories. For instance, a General Order was made for the manufacture of munitions, another for clothing, another for equipment of various kinds. Similar provisions were made also for essential industries for the nation at large, such as dairies. These orders concerned women and young persons, and the preliminary work of investigation, and the enforcement of the orders by day and by night, was the special work of the women's branch of the Inspectorate.

It is unnecessary now to enter upon any account of the need for all that has passed into common parlance as "welfare" work among the women and girls engaged in munitions. Much has already been written on this subject. The need under war conditions was urgent, and the Home Office and

the Ministry of Munitions recognised it. First, through the labours of the Health of Munition Workers Committee, set up by both Departments, and then by means of a special Welfare Department set up by the Ministry of Munitions acting in conjunction with the Factory Department, a system of welfare supervision and the provision of welfare facilities were made compulsory in National Factories and some others, and were pressed upon the attention of all. The history of the welfare movement is the history of the Factory Department of the Home Office. A summary of it is to be found in the recent report of the Committee on Industry and Trade which was set up in 1924, and the chapter on Industrial Welfare deals with the whole subject in proper perspective.[1] More briefly the matter was summed up in answer to a question in the House of Commons on July 27th, 1920, as to what steps are being taken to maintain and stimulate the welfare work in factories initiated during the war. This inquiry and the answer are so germane to the subject of this book that I quote as follows :

" The Home Office obtained statutory powers in 1916 to make orders requiring the provision of welfare arrangements in factories and a number of such orders have been made. The factory inspectors enforce the orders and it is also part of their ordinary routine when visiting works to investigate the welfare conditions and to promote the develop-

1 Committee on Industry and Trade. " Survey of Industrial Relations, 1926," Price 5s. " Industrial Welfare," Chapter III., page 179.

ment of the welfare work. The Home Office has also endeavoured to assist and stimulate voluntary action on the part of employers ; a series of official pamphlets has been issued explaining the principles on which welfare work is based and dealing with it in detail in its different aspects. Conferences have been held with representatives of the Universities, of employers and workpeople, of welfare workers and others, on the important question of the selection and training of welfare workers and generally on the development of welfare work. Where opportunity has offered, the subject has also been pressed on the attention of the Joint Industrial Councils. I am glad to state that the reports of the factory inspectors show that a widespread and increasing interest is being taken in this work and that steady progress is being made in the introduction and improvement of welfare arrangements."

Meanwhile, in 1916, things were becoming more and more complicated, as they will when two or more Government Departments have overlapping functions ! Industrial undertakings were subject to supervision by the War Office, the Admiralty, the Air Force and the Ministry of Munitions, while the Home Office held sway over all their activities in the exercise of its statutory authority under the Factory Acts. Moreover, the other Departments appointed officers to deal with industries. These were new to their respective jobs, and had not, in the nature of things, the knowledge and experience

in matters industrial such as factory inspectors possess. Nor had most of them—particularly in the Ministry of Munitions—the traditions and the status appertaining to officers of an old Department. Various attempts had been made to overcome the difficulties inherent in the situation. So far as the main problem of the efficient and rapid production of munitions and other requirements of the troops lay in the proper handling of large masses of women, the women inspectors were naturally chiefly concerned. Small as their number was, the women's branch threw itself into the work of co-operating with the newly-created Welfare Department of the Ministry of Munitions, and supplied it with all possible information and assistance. A further link was forged when Dr. Edgar Collis, one of the medical inspectors of factories, was seconded to the Ministry to direct the activities of the Welfare Department in succession to Mr. Seebohm Rowntree. For a little while, one of our number, Miss Irene Whitworth (Mrs. W. Drury), was lent to work under Dr. Collis, but her position among the many temporary women welfare officers on the staff was too indefinite for her experience and gifts of organisation to take effect, and she returned to her place in the Factory Department staff, where her services were invaluable.

At the beginning of 1918 Mrs. H. J. Tennant (formerly H.M. Inspector of Factories), who was then Adviser to the Welfare Department, Ministry of Munitions, began to open up negotiations for my temporary release from my duties at the Home

Office in order to direct the women's welfare staff at the Ministry of Munitions. The Home Office were reluctant to deplete their staff further, and I held very strongly to my opinion that my duty was to stay where I was. I knew very well the troubles that beset the Welfare Department of the Ministry of Munitions, but I doubted whether anyone could put right what, in my private judgment, was due to the fundamental mistake of setting up a separate organisation to deal with industrial conditions. However, Mr. Winston Churchill, then Minister of Munitions, sent for me at the end of February and I, as well as the Home Office, fell a victim to his importunity. I am not likely to forget that long and very confidential interview which altered the course of my official life for two years and gave me the most difficult task throughout that time which I think a woman Civil Servant could endeavour to accomplish. Although, as I now believe, my absence from my own Department (notwithstanding that my services, while in these other Departments, were favourably reported on) militated against the fulfilment of some of my cherished hopes of promotion, I have never regretted my decision. I know I was useful in the Department to which I was lent, and was helpful to the women employed on munitions. My appointment was made with the object of securing complete co-operation between the Welfare Department of the Ministry of Munitions and the Home Office, and in order that I should give support and instruction to the large

staff of untrained and industrially inexperienced women welfare officers who were enlisted from various callings and professions.

On March 11th, 1918, I left the Home Office to take up my duties as Director of Women's Welfare at the Ministry of Munitions. I moved across Whitehall to a room in Northumberland Street. The Welfare staff, its clerks, etc., occupied the whole of the houses on one side of that street, which had been (before they were requisitioned by the Government) converted into flats as an annexe to the Grand Hotel, and were not well adapted for offices. However, we were all, from directors (Dr. Collis and I were co-directors, and I was in constant communication with him and his staff of medical men) to messenger girls, far too busy to allow any structural difficulties to trouble us. It is no secret that the troubles were of another kind in the huge Departments of mushroom growth! It was my experience that if jealousies and gossip are steadily ignored by the head of a Department, and each member of the crew is required either to pull his or her full weight or to go and make room for another, the disintegrating forces die of inanition. My staff of women welfare and clerical officers of all grades at headquarters and attached to all the principal industrial centres numbered about one hundred. That they changed in a short time from an inharmonious crowd of women of all ages and callings into a corporate body of loyal and useful servants of the State was a great joy to me. It was not an easy task which was set these

"welfare officers," to go hither and thither into great factories largely managed by autocratic military officers, and without any legal sanctions secure the establishment and maintenance of welfare standards decided on by the Ministry of Munitions in consultation with the Home Office. Their success depended almost entirely upon their obtaining the goodwill of occupiers. It is impossible to enter here into any record of the activities of the Welfare Department or of the progress made by the united efforts of the Home Office and Ministry of Munitions. The chief points are reported elsewhere. But I may perhaps recall one or two typical incidents. Night visits to factories working under war conditions were essential, and were not without their thrills for the inspectors.

We, however, only endured the discomfort and danger at intervals; the women steadily working in these factories were exposed to them daily and hourly. As to the men of the rank and file in the field, so to the army of women in industry the nation owes a debt it must never forget, even if it can never fully repay it. We frequently had the experience of driving after midnight through dark streets, or darker country roads, towards a great mass of buildings or of huts from which no lights emerged, and on entering found all activity and bustle as if it were day. Suddenly a quiet warning would be given which betokened the unwelcome presence of aircraft, and, without hurry or panic, the machinery stopped and the women trooped off silently down into the dug-outs or remained quiet

and disciplined in the workrooms with lights extinguished. It might be that danger was past in half an hour; it might mean a wait of several hours—in some (happily few) cases the dread visitant did some of the damage he came to do. The greatest peril, not chiefly as a result of enemy aircraft, but always present from accidental causes, was in works which were engaged in the manufacture of high explosives. Here the courage of all the women and girls was indeed remarkable, but then the example of their men-folk at "the front" was always before their minds to shame them if they faltered. Extreme precautions against explosion were enforced by the Home Office, and all submitted willingly to rigorous regulations as to dress and behaviour. From these, of course, inspectors were not exempt; indeed, we set an example by readily conforming to such details as removal of hairpins (no bobbed hair then), changing into rubber shoes, etc. It was also necessary, in view of the danger of the processes, to conform to rules by not speaking to those at work (as in other factories), and not going about unattended by the officer in charge. Marvellous indeed it is that the casualties were so few considering the imminent danger and the inexperience of the young persons employed. The most terrible explosion of all occurred a day or two after I had spent some hours in an immense factory making an investigation into the women's health. When the dreadful news reached me that the factory had in one moment of time disappeared with all its busy occupants in one tremendous

explosion, I recollected that the doctor who had accompanied me in my rounds the previous week had said, "Do you realise that any minute we and all this may be blown sky-high?" Of course I had, but there are some things one does not say whatever one may think!

The risk of accident from high explosives was, however, to my mind less terrible than the risk of poisoning incurred in some of the munition factories. Numerically the cases of "T.N.T. poisoning" were not serious in proportion to the numbers exposed to the risk, but the amount of suffering among the women and girls was great. As the use of the explosives increased, the cases of illness began to attract attention, and we made special inquiry into the subject with the medical inspectors of factories and the medical officers attached to the Ministry of Munitions and National Factories. The Home Office made an order in November, 1915, adding toxic jaundice to the diseases notifiable by medical practitioners, and took precautionary steps to protect the workers by periodical medical examinations in the factories, and by enforcing special regulations where the poisonous T.N.T. was used. By these measures and constant watchfulness on the part of all concerned, the effects on health of this and other ingredients of high explosives were much reduced.

Not the least painful of the sad and anxious duties during these years, when war and its terrible evils filled our minds day and night, was that of attending the inquests on girl victims of T.N.T.

poisoning. The inspector of factories is required to assist the coroner in elucidating the cause of death in the case of industrial workers from accidents or disease, and in the course of my duty I have attended many such inquiries respecting women during my years of service. I have always on these occasions found that most autocratic official, the coroner, highly appreciative of the inspector's help. I have often, by his invitation, sat beside him in the court, and have always had full opportunity, not only to examine the witnesses, but to give information and express my opinion on matters referred to me.

Our task in looking after the women engaged in munitions was not confined to the conditions inside the factories. We at the Welfare Department had a special responsibility with regard to the welfare outside the factory. In the interest of the nation, large numbers of women were brought together from distant homes and placed in districts quite new to them to work in the factories. It was to the nation's interest also, as well as its duty, to see that reasonable provision was made for the women's health and well-being. So it followed that a big organisation had to be devised and carried out to arrange for means of transit, for housing, for recreation, for investigation and assistance of individual cases of hardness and sickness. All these activities we arranged and directed from headquarters, and carried out by means of a special staff of extra-mural welfare officers. Space does not allow of particulars being given of any of these

branches of outdoor welfare, important as they all were. In these activities for the benefit of the women in all that concerned their life outside the factory we Government officials were closely associated with the various voluntary associations who did such wonderful work in the emergencies that continually arose. The Girls' Friendly Society, the Young Women's Christian Association, the League of Honour, and many others threw themselves into the work and did untold good. The women police and patrols, with their blend of stern discipline and kindly friendship, did an invaluable service and worked in close association with the Welfare Department. The need of higher motives than mere patriotism, and of greater aids than any official Welfare Department could give in these times of abnormal strain and fierce temptations caused the Archbishop's "Committee for the Spiritual Welfare of Munition Workers" to be inaugurated, and with the consent of the Home Office Miss Anderson and I accepted the invitation to become advisory members. The Committee met regularly at Lambeth Palace, and special arrangements for the promotion of its object were made in every diocese.

The only other welfare matter on which I will touch here is one which occupied a good deal of time of the Welfare Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Munitions, which sat every week to deal with difficult questions. This is the vexed question of crèches in connection with factories in which mothers of young children were employed.

As the war went on more and more young mothers were drawn into munition factories, and, as the older women were working too, the normal home guardianship of infants by relatives became an impossibility. The Board of Education was made the responsible authority for the inspection and supervision of crèches—the Board was not responsible for the initial establishment of a crèche; this was in the hands of voluntary organisations, but when started application could be made to the Board for recognition. In 1914 the Board was able to pay maintenance grants of 4d. per head per attendance of not less than nine hours. The number of crèches was 130, providing for 7,000 children; in addition 31 nurseries were established by the Ministry of Munitions. Use of these was encouraged because children left by the mothers in charge of "minders" were found to be neglected. The crèches and nurseries looked after the children while the mothers were at work on night shifts as well as by day. The Welfare Advisory Committee, on which both employers and workers were represented, gave much attention to the subject of the care of the children of munition workers during the mother's absence at her work. They arrived at the following conclusion: That, whatever opinion might be held as to the desirability of prohibiting the employment of mothers with young children, all would agree that during the war emergency prohibition was unpracticable. That crèches and nurseries under careful supervision were preferable to any system

of home minders for the children. That such crèches and nurseries should not be situated within the factory premises or be directly associated with any particular works, but should preferably be so placed as to be easily accessible to the homes of the mothers in order to prevent harmful exposure of the children to inclement weather. The opinion was often expressed that facilities should be provided in the factories to enable nursing mothers to feed their infants at intervals during working hours. The example of France, where a law was passed in 1917 making a room in the factory where mothers could nurse their babies obligatory, was held up to admiration. I felt strongly that the rush and turmoil, dust and heat of the majority of munition factories was no fit place for the nursing mother, and that, until her infant was old enough to be left for the ordinary working spell, the mother should remain at home. The Welfare Advisory Committee, with some dissentients (and these medical officers), agreed with this view and reported that, while fully appreciating the importance of breast feeding of infants, such facilities in the factories were not desirable. A dinner-hour of sufficient length to enable the nursing mother to rest herself as well as take her own meal, and nurse her baby, was recommended where her services could not be dispensed with to allow her to remain at home for a further period.

The experience compressed into this chapter is a medley of great things and of things by comparison insignificant. The mere association of

war and welfare sounds incongruous. Is not this, however, the very essence of human life? A strange mixture of great and small events, laughter and tears, grave and gay. While men, and some women too, were laying down their lives, others were dancing; while the State demanded ammunition for the killing of men, it devised means to preserve the health and provide comforts and recreation for the women who made it. Meanwhile, in every aspect of its need the people rallied to the nation's call for help. Some of war's lessons, alas, seem to have been forgotten, but some at least have been learnt and are bearing fruit to-day in improved industrial conditions.

As it falls within the period at the head of this chapter I should refer here to the fact that on June 4th, 1917, His Majesty the King created a new Order of Knighthood which owes its existence to the Great War—The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Among the first to be appointed to the new order were members of the Factory Department of the Home Office. Of the Women's Branch the Principal Lady Inspector of Factories was made a Companion of the Order in June, 1917, and I, the Deputy Principal Lady Inspector, was made an Officer of the Order on the following New Year's Day, 1918. I received the decoration at Buckingham Palace from the hands of His Majesty with some gracious words of greeting on March 20th of that year—a few days after my taking up the Welfare appointment at the Ministry of Munitions.

CHAPTER XII

ARMISTICE AND TRAINING

1918–1920

Demobilisation of munition workers—Formation of Women's Training Branch—Transference to Ministry of Labour—Training classes for women—Domestic service—Peace-time industry—Soldiers' widows—Disabled nurses—"Central Committee for Women's Training and Employment."

WITH the conclusion of hostilities came the demobilisation of the industrial army as well as of the military and naval forces of the Crown. The dismissal of thousands of women from munition and other factories, where their services were no longer required, was inevitable. Their absorption into peace-time trades could not take place until these were ready to employ them. The Government immediately after Armistice Day set itself to work to avert, or at least minimise, the hardships of unemployment. The women's welfare staff of the Ministry of Munitions was kept intact under my direction to deal with the women's side of the situation, which for some weeks before November 11th had been foreseen and prepared for. I and my women officers became in a few days a branch of the new "Department of Demobilisation and Resettlement," which, under Sir Stephenson Kent as Comptroller,

took charge of arrangements for both men and women throughout the kingdom. From November, 1918, to February, 1919, all our energies were absorbed in consultations with employers and welfare supervisors all over the country. The object was to organise, during the gradual closing down of great war-time enterprises, the dismissal little by little of the employees and their placing so far as possible in other occupations. Owing to the war pledges given by the Government to the trade unions in respect of the men who joined the forces for the duration of the war, the women employed in engineering and other men's trades had to be dismissed and room found in trades earmarked as "women's trades" before the war for those who wished to remain in industry. Very few, however, of these trades could absorb anything near their pre-war complement of workers owing to lack of raw material and other causes. Still less could these trades afford opportunity of employment to the one and a half million women who it was estimated had newly entered industry since that date. In addition to all the women employed in war work in the factories whose occupation was now at an end, there were all those who had been enrolled in the women's war-service corps—W.A.A.C., W.R.E.N. and W.R.A.F.; some of these also wanted to enter industrial work. Some idea of the problem to be solved may be gained from the fact that the number of first discharges of women, during the first fortnight after the Armistice was signed, was 113,000, and approximately the dis-

missals continued at the same rate for some considerable time. Or, to look at it from another standpoint, 4,162 women were discharged from one National Projectile Factory alone before the end of December, 1918. The welfare superintendent at this factory was greatly concerned about the immediate future of 3,000 of these women who came from a town where the only employment was in engineering works, which was under peace conditions reserved for men.

This sort of thing was going on simultaneously all over the country. I and my staff, in consultation with the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour, were endeavouring during the first three months to deal with the situation. It soon became apparent that the responsibility of the State to all these women could only be discharged by providing for them some form of training in normal occupations. Four years of war work had left the young womanhood of the country without any trade in their hands for peace-time needs. It behoved the Government which urged women to devote their labour to the Nation's war necessities to train them for its normal requirements. Accordingly a department of the Ministry of Labour was formed for the training in normal trades and occupations of ex-soldiers and munition workers of both sexes under Sir James Currie as director. To this department I, with my staff of welfare officers and clerks, was transferred in February, 1919. At the urgent request of the Minister of Labour, Sir Robert Horne, my services

were lent for a longer period by the Home Office, in order that I might take control as Director of the Women's Training Branch.

This branch, under Sir James Currie, but directed and staffed by women, developed a system of emergency free training for women with a maintenance allowance paid to each pupil during a course of from three to six months' duration. We moved into quarters in St. Ermin's Hotel, Victoria Street, which had been commandeered as offices during the war. My staff was supplemented by women holding special qualifications for the work of supervising the equipment and staffing of training centres. I was fortunate in obtaining the services, among others, of Miss Lilian Barker, C.B.E., who had become famous as superintendent at Woolwich Arsenal of over 25,000 women, and with whose work I was intimately acquainted. She and Miss Clapham, of the Ministry of Labour, and Miss Esplin became my principal officers in succession to Miss Dorothea Proud (Mrs. Pavy), Miss Broughton (Lady Chatterjee) and Miss Walton, who left when the Welfare Department was merged in the Training Branch. Miss Grace Hadow, the clever and efficient Deputy Director of Welfare, had also retired at the end of 1918.

The only occupation at the moment which could absorb women, and was indeed crying out for them, was domestic service, and this, alas, was distasteful to the large majority. It was not surprising that it should be so when we consider the restraint resident service inevitably imposes upon the free

use of such leisure as even the best organised household can provide. Moreover, these workers skilled in munition work lacked any knowledge of domestic work. Many of them had lived in hostels for years where they were themselves waited upon and cooked for, and where dancing and other forms of recreation with congenial companions filled all spare time. Could the prejudice be overcome and the vacant household posts be filled? It was worth trying and we set to work. An advisory committee was formed, on which the Labour representatives, Miss Mary Macarthur and Miss Bondfield, sat, and this made proposals for the better organisation of domestic service, including hours, meal-times, outings and holidays. Meetings were held at the factories and the Labour Exchanges in which it was sought to stir the imagination of the women by appeals to their patriotism to come forward for the national service of building and staffing homes as they had done for the national service of providing munitions to defend them. Training in domestic work, both to enable women to earn their living as servants and to prepare them to keep their own homes as wives and mothers, was offered and training centres were set up. It was no light matter to equip and maintain these domestic classes, particularly under the watchful eye to economy of the Treasury and with the necessity of obtaining all we needed through the Office of Works. The paramount need was to commence training at once so as to draft the women into suitable classes before they were finally disbanded.

Applications for training poured in—officialdom thwarted and delayed the efforts of my staff, and the first training centre was not opened until May, 1919.

However, difficulties were overcome in time, and to make a long story short, domestic training centres in London, Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham and many other places were from that time onward filled with relays of young women in training for a thirteen weeks' course under certificated teachers. The progress the pupils made and the interest and enthusiasm they developed was amazing, and the best of all testimonials for their teachers. I could not myself leave headquarters as often as I could have wished to visit the training centres, but when I did so I found that the reports which reached me had not overstated the result. Women and girls who had never peeled a potato were turning out excellent dinners, housemaids and parlourmaids proudly showed their skill, and several enthusiastically exclaimed that they had "no idea housework would be so interesting." Needless to say, would-be employers tumbled over each other in their eagerness to secure the services of the trainees. Everyone willing to go into service had ample choice of a situation, and we had evidence of the success of the many placed.

I may as well, before passing on to speak of the industrial training, add here that when in 1920 the training branch over which I presided was disbanded and I returned to the Home Office the "Central Committee on Women's Training and

Employment" continued the work of "training centres" for domestic service with the same or even greater success. The experiment of 1918 had fully justified itself, over 2,000 women having been successfully trained for domestic service. I shall have more to say on this in relation to training in general later on.

It was, however, training munition workers to take their place in normal women's industries that was the chief object of the Women's Training Branch. The chief of such industries are clothing in all its branches, laundry work, weaving and spinning, cardboard boxes, food, etc. In some of these we set up training centres in London and in the principal towns. We were guided in our choice of subjects by the extent of the demand for workers, and the best prospect of the absorption of pupils when trained, and of favourable conditions for those employed. In these matters we consulted employers and the trades unions concerned. We found our path hedged about with almost insurmountable obstacles, so few were the openings providing conditions satisfying the aspirations of Labour. Our most promising field proved to be tailoring and dressmaking. Seventy-seven courses were carried through and 3,248 women were trained and launched. Employers at the outset had been sceptical of seeing any result from six months' training in work for which three years in a factory or workshop was normally allowed. When they visited our centres at the end of the course to see if the pupils were fit to be taken on in their own

works, they expressed amazement and admiration for the qualities of the workmanship. Indeed, I have often seen and wondered at the good work turned out in the time by women who, when they first came, did not literally know on which finger to put the thimble or how to thread a needle.

After my experience of intensive training under a good teacher—one not only a good worker herself, but able to teach and to impart enthusiasm to her pupils—I am convinced that trades should be thus *taught* and not be left to be " picked up " by so-called " learners " in a workroom. Where production is the first object, teaching is sacrificed to it. I found it necessary to secure that production should in all our classes be subordinated to the teaching. The centres did, however, before the course terminated produce excellent goods, and these were exhibited at the close and sold, the proceeds effecting a substantial reduction in the cost. One particularly attractive centre I remember. It occupied the whole of the upper floors of a large block in Shaftesbury Avenue, built just before the war for shops, showrooms and warehouses. The superintendent was a handsome, well-educated and highly-certificated technical teacher, and under her were dressmaking experts and a man tailor. All the pupils had been munition workers in engineering shops or filling ammunition with high explosives. They were a mixed lot, some very refined, some very rough—all entirely ignorant of needlecraft and rather disdainful of it. Yet under the good-humoured kindly discipline of the superintendent and the

patient, competent artists in their craft, who knew how to impart some of their own enthusiasm as well as skill, the miracle happened in every fresh course. The various elements were fused into a harmonious whole, and little by little dainty clothes and tailored coats and skirts would be formed, and bright-eyed women display with pride what had been accomplished. "I never thought I could do it." "I just love it." They would be anxious to tell what fresh hope and interest the training had given in exchange for the dreadful helplessness and hopelessness of the demobilised war-worker. Every one of the training centres throughout the country could tell a similar story. The personal influence of the superintendents of our centres and of the teachers under them should be reckoned highly as a valuable public service.

I must bring this side of my subject to a close by a mention of two other classes of women for whom we provided training, *i.e.*, widows of soldiers and disabled nurses. The necessity for making provision for these brought the Women's Training Branch into close co-operation with the Ministry of Pensions. The powers of the State to give training to these war sufferers to enable them to supplement their inadequate pensions were first vested in the Ministry of Pensions by Royal Warrant, but were transferred to the Ministry of Labour in 1919. We received thousands of applications, all of which had to be very carefully investigated and considered. When satisfied that the case was a suitable one, individual training

had to be provided, as it was only rarely that a place in one of our centres could be found or would meet the need of the widow. The largest number of widows were placed in training as practical midwives. The need for midwives in rural districts was great, and many of the widows lived in the country, and, having a small pension, were better able than most women to accept the very precarious living this calling offers. As all candidates had to pass the examination of the Central Midwives Board, young women of good education as well as character were selected for this training.

Other very varied kinds of training were given, such as ladies' hairdressing, confectionery, photographic studio work. Sewing and knitting machines were supplied and lessons in working the same were given in the home in some cases where young children could not be left. The gratitude of these young women and the effect the training had in brightening their lives was one of the happy experiences of this strenuous and anxious time.

Of all the classes of women we dealt with, I think the saddest were the disabled military nurses. The amount of the disability pension varied, of course, according to the nature of their physical disability—at most it was lamentably small. The applications received numbered about three hundred, but less than a third of them were placed in training. Many were found to be physically unfit for the training they so ardently desired, and we could only refer them to the " Officer's Friend " for such help as could be given. Those

who were well enough to take up any occupation we trained as dispensers, or for massage and electrical treatment, or for Public Health appointments, secretaries, chauffeurs to doctors, or in poultry farming. These women, some of whom had been matrons in charge of hospitals at the front, were, owing to their war service, unable any longer to pursue their calling. The strain of unremitting care of the sick and wounded under the terrible conditions of active service had left them with shattered health. Positions of great responsibility and danger had been theirs during the war; bitterly many of them felt the indignity of being supplicants for State aid, given as it seemed with a niggardly hand. Eagerly the opportunity of training was seized, with the prospect it afforded of once more being of service.

In June, 1920, when I returned to my duties at the Home Office, the emergency work for which the Women's Training Branch had been formed was nearly ended. For a little while it was carried on under the direction of Miss Clapham, with a gradually diminishing staff and in collaboration with the Central Committee on Women's Training, which ultimately took over such training of women as the Government decided should still be carried on under its auspices. The committee, to which I have already referred, was originally appointed at the outbreak of war to administer the "Queen's Work for Women Fund," raised by private subscription for the relief of distress. The committee was reconstituted in January, 1920, by the Minister

of Labour "to consider, devise and carry out special schemes of work and training for women unemployed or whose earning capacity or opportunities have been injuriously affected as a result of conditions arising out of the war." I became a member of this committee (a position I still retain by the desire of the committee), which, under the chairmanship of the Marchioness of Crewe, has afforded training under a scholarship scheme for individual educated women, and also household and industrial training in centres for unemployed women. The expenses of the former have been met entirely by the committee's fund, and of the latter partly from that source and partly from a grant from the Treasury. The committee is composed of well-known women representing every political party and very varied interests. No fresh applications can now be received for the scholarship scheme, but training centres in homecraft are still being carried on in some of the industrial towns to meet the needs of the large numbers of unemployed women. Women who are thus trained are enabled at once to find remunerative employment in service, in institutions or private houses. The committee is the only agency which to any appreciable extent is coming to the aid of women for whom the chance of employment depends to a great measure on their being in some degree at least trained in a trade or handicraft. More industrial training could be given if the funds would allow.

CHAPTER XIII

POST-WAR CHANGES

1920–1926

Return to the Home Office—Reorganisation of the Factory Department—The Women Factory Inspectors' Branch abolished—Appointment as first woman principal—New duties in old fields—The two-shift system—Lighting in factories—Interchange between branches of the Public Service—A fresh subject—*i.e.*, Shops—End of thirty years' service.

ANOTHER chapter of my official life closed in June, 1920, when, after a send-off from the assembled members of the Training Department at the Ministry of Labour, I resumed my place in the Factory Department at the Home Office. I left it originally for two months, and stayed away eventually two years in response to repeated requests for the continued loan of my services. The new chapter which was then opened must close this book. It covers five and a half years and included the termination of my service in the Factory Department and my transference to administrative work as Principal in the Home Office. This change took place within a year of my return. I do not propose to say more about the happenings which led up to, or accompanied, the reorganisation of the Factory Department, already referred to when I sketched in Chapter III. the history of the

women's branch which was now ended. Great as the change was to the women concerned, it made no break in the continuity of much of the work with which I was chiefly concerned; it only changed the angle from which I viewed it. I ceased to have any responsibility for the conduct of a staff of women inspectors; I had no longer to enforce the law or to carry out or superintend investigations. But as an officer in the Industrial Division I had to deal with my old subjects administratively. I shall content myself with a reference to two only of such subjects already familiar to me, namely, the two-shift system of employment and lighting in factories and workshops.

An Act as regards the two shifts had been passed in 1920 to amend the law relating to the employment of women, young persons and children, so as to give effect to a convention adopted by the International Labour Organisation of the League of Nations at Washington in 1919. The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act, 1920, besides abolishing the employment of children in factories and workshops, and making it clear that night work for women and young persons was illegal (except under certain circumstances), sanctioned a new departure as to the hours of women and young persons aged sixteen, and over. During the war it had been found useful to allow eight-hour day shifts of women and young persons, and, after much discussion and investigation by a Departmental Committee, the consent of Parliament had been given to a trial being made

of the system for five years. The shift system, common as it was among men in industry, had never been allowed for women under the Factory Act. It is open to two objections: first, that it upsets the natural order of daily life and work, and second, that it is difficult to check illegal employment. The morning shift of eight hours entails an early start at 6 a.m. The afternoon shift keeps the women and young persons at work until 10 p.m. and necessitates journeying home at a still later hour. If no change-over from one shift to another is made, the workers have continually to endure the strain of early or of late hours respectively; if the sets change over weekly or fortnightly the rhythm of personal habit is upset. In any case, home life is to some extent dislocated. An unscrupulous employer can, of course with the acquiescence of the employees, employ the same workers illegally on two consecutive shifts. These objections have been urged frequently, but after five years' experience of the system they have proved to be of little importance. The advantages of a sixteen hours' working day which imposes only an eight hour day strain on any individual worker has been appreciated by employers under pressure of emergency, and it is as a temporary expedient that two shifts have been chiefly used. The workers themselves have appreciated the extra leisure an eight-hour shift affords, especially as wages have been adjusted so that loss was not entailed. The Home Office has so fenced round with precautions the two-shift method of working that evasion of

the law or exploitation of the workers is wellnigh impossible. Moreover, the system has provided for a new departure in procedure. Permission to work two shifts cannot be sought by the employer alone; it is contingent on a joint application of workers and employer. Such association in working arrangements is good for both and it affords a precedent which all who have the removal of causes of industrial unrest at heart would do well to ponder. If the Home Office is satisfied after investigation has been made by the factory inspector that the case is one for a two-shift order, welfare and other conditions may be, and invariably are, attached to the order. My own experience of the working of this two-shift system was first from the factory inspector's side as responsible for reporting on these facts, and then on the administrative side criticising the application and dealing with the granting of the order and the conditions attaching to it, or refusing to grant the order.

This affords one instance out of many of the advantage which accrues from close association of the departmental officers on the one hand and the administrative officers on the other. In the very considerable amount of work entailed in the inauguration and continuance of this new system of shifts, frequent consultation between the Chief and deputy Chief Inspectors and the administrative staff was necessary, and being in the same building, they were able to speak instead of writing and thus save valuable time. Great advantage, too, is obtained if both aspects of a subject come within the

personal knowledge of the same individual. Speaking from my own experience, I can testify to the advantage an officer who has to deal with a subject such, for instance, as factory law administratively, gains from practical acquaintance with factories and factory workers. The questions which arise on paper are in that case full of living interest, and a sense of proportion is also present, without effort, in dealing with reports. Similarly I believe that a Departmental staff, such as inspectors engaged in the enforcement of Acts and Orders, would gain in their work and be of much greater use to the side concerned with policy if they had some experience of administrative work at headquarters. I would like to suggest such a temporary interchange of personnel as would allow of First Division officers being sent forth, say for six months, to do some inspecting, and Inspectors taking their place for the same period in administrative work. That some dislocation of routine and some temporary delay in the work would follow, I realise, but I am bold enough to think that the result would be the increased efficiency and doubled interest of the staff.

Earlier in this book I have mentioned lighting in factories as another matter occupying much of my time between 1920 and 1926, both as a factory inspector and after I became an administrative officer. This subject has interested me greatly all through the years of my inspecting, but it was on my return to the Home Office in 1920 that I was appointed a member of the Departmental

Committee on Lighting in Factories. I had given evidence before the Committee in 1913.[1] In 1915 the committee issued a report before it ceased to function for the duration of the war. It was revived again in 1920 under the chairmanship of Mr. C. Dampier Whetham, F.R.S. We published two reports in which legislation is recommended. There can be no question that it is essential both for health and safety that proper lighting should be provided in factories and workshops. Many suppose that good light, being necessary for efficient work, self-interest alone would make the employer anxious to obtain it. This, however, is by no means commonly the case. It is astonishing how little attention has been paid to good lighting even in otherwise well-equipped works, and in the general management of factories and workshops it is not too much to say that until recently the subject received no attention whatever. Dirty windows and skylights obscured daylight when it was available, and dirty and dilapidated fittings, badly placed, diminished the light value of such illuminant (whether oil, gas or electricity) as was provided. Moreover, much harm has been done to the eyesight of countless dressmakers' apprentices and other young beginners seated, as they mostly were, in the worst lighted part of the room, or with backs to the window, stooping over their work. The Home Office may justly claim that no

[1] First Report of the Departmental Committee on Lighting in Factories and Workshops, Vol. I., Report and Appendices (Cd. 8000), 1915; Vol. II. (Cd. 8001), 1915, page 70. Second Report (Cd. 1418), 1921. Third Report (Cd. 1686), 1922.

employer can in future sin in ignorance in the matter of lighting the works. The advantages of good light, and particulars of what constitutes good light, have through the work of the Home Office Committee and the means taken to make known its conclusions been brought home to employers and workers.

This educational work for those who will heed it requires to be now supplemented by legal requirements for those who will not. This next step awaits the long promised amendment of the Factory Act. No sooner had the Lighting Committee completed its work and issued its third report in 1922 than the Home Office got into touch with all the chief industries concerned, and urged them to consider its recommendations and test their value for themselves. An offer was made that representatives of the Home Office would meet the associations of employers and workers and discuss the best form of lighting for particular processes. This duty was undertaken by Mr. D. R. Wilson, secretary of the Industrial Fatigue Research Board, and myself. I attended by invitation meetings of Joint Industrial Councils and of Trades Boards, and addressed them on the subject of industrial lighting and answered questions from both employers and workers' sides. There was on some occasions much good humoured "heckling" from those sceptical of Government "interference," but the outstanding feature of all these meetings was the great interest (and I must add the astonishing ignorance!) displayed. Some

of the factory inspectors were provided with instruments for measuring the amount of light provided for the workers, and a large number of readings were taken in factories and workshops. The results have been reported in the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories for 1920 to 1925.[1] The records show how high is the illumination provided by employers who have given attention to the subject and how desperately low is the light in which large numbers of operatives have to carry out fine work. There are now placed within reach of all industries excellent systems of lighting adapted to all needs. Official guidance has been given as to the essentials of good lighting, what to secure and what to avoid. Further inquiry is being pursued as to the amount of light best suited to certain processes, and in this the co-operation of employers and workers is still needed. The experience of the committee in carrying out some of our many experiments in 1920 to 1922 illustrated the value of intelligent co-operation from the workers. It is always difficult to get workers in the factories to express with clearness and accuracy the effect on their work and their feelings due to different conditions to which probably they have by use become accustomed. We therefore set up, with the assistance of the National Physical Laboratory, a workshop with different lighting by natural, or artificial, means, arranged so as to be altered to afford different

[1] Annual Reports of Chief Inspector of Factories, 1920, Chapter IX., by Rose E. Squire; 1924, page 47; 1925, page 40.

degrees of illumination, and there every day for some time a few selected women accustomed to the work made button-holes on dark and light material and did other sewing requiring attention to detail. Records were carefully kept of the speed and efficiency of the work under different lighting conditions, and the workers were encouraged to form and express their opinion of the light and its effect on their eyes and their general feelings. The expression used by one of them when the light was low was that she felt "starved of light, and the work was a continual strain." When provided with a brilliant light close to the work while the room itself was in semi-darkness (a favourite method in some works where good lighting has received attention), the workers said it gave an imprisoned, hypnotised, shut-in feeling difficult to express—the surrounding darkness and the brilliant spot of light on the field of work "acted like a nagging foreman keeping us at our task." I have always found workers rejoicing in a brightly lighted workroom, as it "keeps us cheerful." Happily, the mental as well as the physical health of workers is now being considered, and the psychologist as well as the doctor is being pressed into the service of the industrial worker.

I must, before I close this record, say something on the subject of retail shops which, when I had settled down to my new work in the Industrial Division, came into my hands. Very few people probably realise that the Home Office is concerned with shops as well as with factories. Sir

Edward Troup, who has enlightened the public as to the many and varied functions of the Home Office in his delightful book on the Department,[1] says: "The relation of the Home Office to the Shops Act is different to its relation to the Factory Acts. Under the Shops Act the local authority makes orders, appoints inspectors, and attends to all the details of administration: the Home Secretary is the central authority, and his functions are confined to confirming and revoking orders, making regulations for procedure, holding inquiries, and the general supervision which results from his parliamentary responsibility for legislation."

As a factory inspector I had no official concern with this branch of the Home Office. It was not until in 1921 I was transferred to the administrative work of the Department that I became intimately acquainted with its activities regarding shops. I had, however, always taken a very great interest in shop assistants and shops legislation, and on two occasions, widely separated in point of time, the Home Office had employed me in connection with shops. The first was in 1902, when I was instructed to combine with my inspection of factories and workshops in the mining districts of Wales an inquiry into the hours of closing of shops there; the second was in 1915, when I was appointed a member of a Departmental Committee on Shops,[2] under the chairmanship of Mr. Cecil Harmsworth,

1 "The Home Office," by Sir Edward Troup, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., page 169.
2 "Shops Committee," Report, 1915, Cd. 8113.

Under Secretary of State for the Home Department. This committee was set up during the war "to consider the conditions of retail trade which can best secure that the further enlistment of men or their employment in other national service may not interfere with the necessary operations of that trade." This committee was able to facilitate the substitution of women for men as assistants in grocery and other shops where men were employed, and as waitresses in hotels and restaurants. It encouraged the training classes for women taking up this work. It recommended earlier closing hours as a war-time measure.

It was after my transfer to the administrative side of the Home Office that I had as part of my normal duty to deal with the Shops Acts. It was a revelation to me to find how much intricate and important work, as well as routine work, devolved upon the Home Office in connection with the shops. The law relating to shops is very complicated and its interpretation has been the subject of many legal decisions. Questions, not only of academic interest, but affecting the daily life of assistants and the livelihood of shopkeepers and the convenience of the public, arise continually. The need for amendment of the existing law and of further legislation is constantly pressed upon the attention of the Department. It would need a separate volume even to sketch adequately the various points of interest which force themselves upon the attention of anyone who makes a study of this subject. All I propose to do is to indicate as briefly

as I can the chief matters to which, in my opinion, public attention should now be given.

Factories and the needs of factory workers have attracted of recent years a large measure of public interest. Shops and shop assistants have been too much neglected. We need an educated public opinion based on present-day facts, not outworn theories. Is it not time that the shopping public (especially women, who are in every rank of life "shoppers" *par excellence*) should think out some of the problems of shop life, viewed from the standpoint of shop assistant, shopkeeper and customer?

The law relating to shops is contained in the following Acts: The Shops Act, 1912 (which amended and consolidated the earlier Acts of 1892–1899 and 1904); the Shops Act, 1913 (which is adoptive and applies only to public-houses and refreshment houses); and the Shops (Early Closing) Act, 1920–1921. This last is a survival of the war-time regulations made under the Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A.) and kept alive in this Act, which is continued in being year by year by the Expiring Laws Act. The duty of enforcing these Acts is laid upon the local authorities throughout the kingdom. That is to say, upon the London County Council as regards London, and elsewhere upon the Borough and Town Councils, the Urban District or County Councils as the case may be.

Shops inspectors are appointed by local authorities and not by the Home Office. They have similar powers and duties in regard to shops to those of the Home Office inspectors in regard

to factories. But there is a difference, far-reaching in its effect, between the two systems of inspection. In the case of factories, a staff of expert inspectors, men and women, work under a chief inspector who is centred in London in close touch at the Home Office, with the Home Secretary, and the permanent officials carry out inspection on a uniform plan and undertake investigations for the information of headquarters. In the case of shops each local authority assigns the duty of shops inspection to one or more of its officials already employed as sanitary inspector or inspector of weights and measures. These inspectors have no connection with the Home Office or with each other. Except as regards Public Health matters they have no special training to fit them for their duty as shops inspectors, and they have no statutory obligation to furnish reports or supply information on this part of their work. Local authorities are obliged to practise economy and are not prone to extravagance in equipping themselves with shops inspectors. Although large numbers of women and girls are employed as shop assistants and as waitresses and kitchen-hands in restaurants, I cannot find that women are employed as shop inspectors. I know of one only who is employed by the L.C.C. Though others were employed in London a few years ago, as each of these died or retired on marriage a man replaced her. One would like to know whether our women councillors on local bodies are satisfied that there is no need for women inspectors of shops seeing

that the Home Office employs women as inspectors of factories !

No doubt many of the local inspectors carry out shops inspection conscientiously and well, but it is more than doubtful whether, taking the country as a whole, the ordinary shops inspector is either well qualified for that particular job or has time among his other duties to do more than give spasmodic attention to flagrant offenders when special complaint or some other reason for action spurs him on. Councils are not unfrequently composed largely of local tradesmen, and these are not too keen on inspection of their shops. The vigilant inspector may find himself uncomfortably placed in conflict with those who employ him, and his life is not in such circumstances a happy one. During the war the police were entrusted with the duty of seeing that the shops were closed at the prescribed hour. Some Councils still rely chiefly on the police for reporting cases of premises open after closing hours. It is known that any " inspection " by the police which necessitates more than observation from the street is discouraged by the Home Office. The entrance of a police constable into a shop full of customers and his questionings, notebook in hand, would not unnaturally be resented.

This, then, is the position. The Central Authority has no intimate knowledge through its own officers of the conditions in shops under the Shops Acts as it has of factories under the Factories Acts. No reports are published by local authorities respecting the administration of the Shops Acts or the

conditions under which retail trade is carried on in their district. The annual reports published by medical officers of health (under whose direction the officers entrusted with the inspection of shops generally work) may be searched in vain except for a few meagre lines in rare cases. The London County Council furnishes a brief paragraph on the subject in their report on the Public Service branch of their work, but of late years little can be gleaned from this. Of statistics, such as are supplied in great detail on matters coming under other Acts, there are practically none. There are no available figures regarding the numbers of men, women and young persons employed or the number and description of offences against the Shops Acts. One looks, alas, in vain for any " human document " (such as the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories furnishes respecting industry) which might enlighten public opinion as to how the shopkeeper or shop assistant fares under the existing administration in our great cities, or in our villages. Truly this is rather strange in a " nation of shopkeepers ! "

So far as I can form an opinion, I believe the following to be matters in which reform is needed. More first-hand information should, however, first be obtained by experts in order that justice may be done to all classes of persons concerned.

It is a criminal offence to keep a shop open for the service of customers after the closing hour fixed under the Shops Acts. The evening closing hour fixed for shops in general throughout the kingdom is eight o'clock on every day other than

Saturday, and on Saturday nine o'clock. Chocolates and other sweets, ice-cream, fruit and table-waters may be sold up to 9.30 p.m. on weekdays other than Saturday, and until 10 p.m. on Saturday. The General Closing Orders fixing these hours are a relic of war-time regulations, and they are continued annually by Parliament pending fresh legislation. Every year when the time for considering the question of their renewal comes round, arguments in the House of Commons and outside it are brought forward for the removal of what is stigmatised as "war-time tyranny." This opposition is met by equally strong support of a measure which is claimed to be "the charter of liberty for the shopkeeper as well as for the shop assistant." Probably the solution of what is undoubtedly a difficult problem is to be found in an adherence to the principle of compulsory closing of shops while allowing for more elasticity in its application to particular classes of shops at special seasons and in certain localities.

It is beyond question that the Early Closing movement, which has been pressed forward with such zeal for more than eighty years by the Early Closing Association, has promoted the benefit of both employers and employed. For over forty years the Association's indefatigable secretary, Captain Larking, has persevered in the work, with which many famous names have been connected—Lord John Russell, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Sir John Lubbock (Lord Avebury), Mr. Winston Churchill. The principle for which it stands has

been adopted in shops legislation throughout the Dominions and in many countries in Europe and America. Select Committees of the House of Commons sitting in 1886, 1892, 1896 and 1901, and the Committee of the House of Lords in 1901, have examined witnesses and supported compulsory early closing as necessary for the protection of shopkeepers against unfair competition and shop assistants against overwork. The first of these Committees in 1886 reported "that the hours, ranging from eighty to eighty-five a week, are ruinous to health, that they are unnecessary, and that there is an earnest desire on the part of shopkeepers as well as assistants in favour of legislation to reduce them." This reference was made by Sir John Lubbock (Lord Avebury) in a letter to *The Times* in 1893 in support of a Shop Bill then before Parliament. Still legislation tarried, and I recall my own experience ten years later, when, during the inquiry to which I have already referred, I found all shops open between 10 p.m. and midnight in the mining towns in Wales. The weary shop assistants and the exasperated shopkeepers urged me to report to the Home Office the urgent need for compulsory closing hours. The voluntary efforts of tradesmen to close at ten or earlier were rendered abortive by the few who kept open and captured the customers who thronged the streets till midnight. Late shopping was admitted by general consent to be a bad habit, not a necessity. The Act of 1904 brought some relief, and the General Closing Order of 1915 has maintained in being the

better habits practised under war-time conditions. Only last year when a deputation of shopkeepers was received by the Home Secretary in favour of continuance of the eight o'clock closing order, I heard one of them relate how as a boy it was part of his duty in the evening to keep a watch outside his master's shop and report as soon as the grocer down the street put up his shutters. When this was done, his master would close also. Another member of the deputation described his experiences in the past as " out of bed into apron ; out of apron into bed."

There is, however, the other side. Sir Walter de Frece voiced the opinion of many in an article in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1921. He proposed that employees' hours " should be regulated as under the Factory Acts, but that the shops should be kept open as long as the proprietor wishes, which will not be longer than the public wants." A similar proposal was put forward when the Shops Bill, 1911, was under discussion and was strenuously opposed by the Early Closing Association. It is in relation to the " small shopkeeper " who employs no assistants that the principle of compulsory early closing has been most strongly challenged. The case of the " small shopkeeper " has received added support since the war from the fact that it has become to a great extent the case of the ex-service man. We have in the present day two extremes to consider. On the one hand the multiple shops and big emporiums of limited companies, and on the other the little one-

man businesses set up by ex-service men, unemployed miners and other workmen, and war widows. The problem is how to deal rightly with these absolutely different forms of retail trade. The requirements of each of these two extremes differ from that of the mass of normal shopkeepers in whose interests the existing Shops Acts were framed. Can we squeeze all into the same mould without making it impossible for one or the other to trade? Have we any right to favour the big business and neglect the needs of the little shop? To promote the interests of the one and to kill the other? The wealthy company and big employer of labour find no difficulty in making their voices heard when fresh legislation is under discussion, and their requirements are much alike and are capable of clear presentation. The small shopkeeper, on the other hand, is very isolated and slow to state his case. The circumstances of the one class of shopkeeper differ so much from those of another that no general statement fits them all.

I confess myself to an ineradicable sympathy with the "under dog," and to a resentful feeling against the tyranny of majorities; but how to effect the greatest good of the greatest number of shopkeepers and assistants while yet preserving the liberty of the small trader seems to me as yet an insoluble problem. Mr. Macquisten and Mrs. Philipson, among other Members of Parliament who have championed the cause of the small shopkeeper, have touched our hearts, but our heads refuse consent to any of the new legislative proposals they

have put forward. Here is a field for much patient personal inquiry by experts in the Public Service before our Shops Law is overhauled.

So far I have referred only to the general closing of shops under the Emergency Provisions of the Shops Act, 1920, and have made no comment on early closing orders under the Shops Act, 1912. I wished first to focus attention on the principle of compulsorily closing the shop in distinction to restricting the employment of the assistants. The Shops Act, 1912, requires shops to be closed for one afternoon a week and gives power to the local authority to make orders fixing the day on which the weekly half-holiday shall be given. It also gives the local authority power to make orders when the majority of the shopkeepers in an area desire it for closing the shops at 7 p.m. or later. These provisions have, on the whole, worked well. There is a strong preference for local option in regard to fixing closing hours, and many demands are made that the general closing order under the 1920 Act should be allowed to lapse and that the country should revert to the pre-war practice of open shops except where the majority of traders desire a closing time to be fixed by local order.

It is in the matter of local closing orders that the Home Office is brought into close contact with Shops Act administration. Orders made by local authorities for an evening closing order must be confirmed by the Home Secretary and can only be revoked by him. The same applies to orders which local authorities are empowered to make requiring

certain trades, which otherwise are exempt, to close on the weekly half-holiday. Orders submitted for confirmation are closely scrutinised at the Home Office and much correspondence with town clerks over details of procedure is usually necessary. The Home Office regulations designed to secure the free expression of opinion on the part of the shopkeepers concerned are somewhat intricate, and the officials of the local authorities are not always very versed in the prescribed method of obtaining votes or drafting orders. Patience and a keen eye for gaps in information supplied, and an uncompromising insistence on accuracy are required from the Civil Servants responsible for this branch of the Home Office work. In addition to this routine duty, important questions of law and of principle arise in connection with the classification of shops, and the numerous exceptions excluding different classes of trade from certain of the closing provisions. Of these questions of law and principle much might be said, as their right solution is vital to the fair administration of Acts which it must be remembered affect the daily life of the people. It must, however, suffice to mention one or two simple instances.

What, for example, constitutes the trade of a grocer ? What articles may a customer be legally served with after closing hours fixed by a local order for grocers ? There are certain ambiguous articles sold indiscriminately by several trades. Dripping is one of these, and a High Court decision has been obtained in regard to it.[1] The judgment

[1] Schuck *v.* Banks, 2 K.B., 1914.

of the court in that case was to the effect that a grocer, if he sells dripping, is not thereby carrying on the trade of a pork butcher, and vice versa. Then, again, is the trade of a pork butcher included in that of butcher unless specifically mentioned ? "Newly-cooked" food to be consumed off the premises is exempt from eight o'clock (nine o'clock Saturday) closing, but there is much difference of opinion as to what articles may be included in this description. Harassed local authorities have asked the Home Office to issue a list ; the ham, beef and cooked meat trade have suggested articles for inclusion ; but local names for delicacies such as weasand sausages, bung sausages, black puddings, faggots, etc., differ in North and South, East and West, and to compile a register would indeed be a complicated task. The object of the exception is, of course, to enable working people to buy freshly-cooked supper dishes which cannot be laid in early in the day. "Perishable articles" are exempt from certain closing provisions of the Act, and here, again, is a field for much disputation. Far-reaching in its effect is the answer to the query : What constitutes "a meal" ? It is a criminal offence to sell a cigarette after 8 p.m. and on Saturday after 9 p.m. except "as part of meal." Is it, however, lawful if a biscuit or a sandwich is sold with the cigarette ? Then what is the position as regards the money-in-the-slot automatic machine ? Can the law-abiding customer take a cigarette or box of matches from an automatic machine outside a tobacconist's shop after 8 p.m.,

(the closing hour for the sale of smokers' requisites), or from such a machine inside a confectioner's shop, which may sell sweets (but not tobacco) up till 9.30 (Saturday 10), without aiding and abetting the shopkeeper in the commission of a felony? No one can say. Magistrates differ and no case has yet been carried to the High Court for a decision. Meanwhile a firm of cigarette and tobacco manufacturers has supplied thousands of automatic machines free to tobacconists for the purpose of sales beyond the legal hours for open shop sales.

The sale of intoxicants and refreshments is exempt from the early closing orders under the Shops Acts. This privilege has given rise to complaints in some quarters. First, because of the late hours of employment of bar attendants, waitresses and kitchen-hands. Secondly, because (*a*) the sale of beer, wine and spirits is lawful at hours when milk and a loaf of bread and other food may not be purchased, and (*b*) while "refreshments" may lawfully be enjoyed at all hours, sweets, chocolates and ice-cream are specifically excluded from this term. The ice-cream vendors made a pathetic appeal personally by the deputation to the Home Secretary to remove the offensive distinction which allowed ice-cream in summer evenings to those who could afford a meal at a restaurant, and forbade it to be partaken of by working people in a confectioner's shop. Do we not all know, although the reason for it may not have been known to us all, that the boxes of

chocolates and the ice-creams brought round to stalls and pit alike in theatre or in cinema disappear from our view and tempt us no more when half-past nine o'clock has struck.

Any contribution to a consideration of the ethics of " interference with the liberty of the subject " in the matter of shops and shopping would be incomplete without reference to Sunday closing. Sunday trading has been a battle-ground for opposing views for many years, and even now merely to mention it is to kindle into flame the smouldering fires of controversy. It is a subject which any Government may well hesitate to handle. The law of Athelstan about the year 925 forbade Sunday trading. The Lord's Day Observance Act of 1677 has never been repealed and stands on the Statutes Book in the quaint language of the days of Charles II. This Act " for the better observation of the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday " enacts that " all persons shall on every Sunday apply themselves to the duties of piety and true religion . . . and no tradesman, labourer or other person whatever shall do or exercise worldly labour or business or works of their ordinary calling (unless of necessity or charity) . . . or shall publickly cry, show forth or expose for sale any wares . . . except milk, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m."

This old Act is for the most part a dead letter, and it is probably true to say that Sunday trading in Great Britain is increasing. The maximum penalty of five shillings imposed by the Act of

1677 no longer serves as a deterrent to the traders, and since 1871 a restriction has been put upon the enforcement of the statute by the condition that no prosecution can be instituted under it without the consent of two justices of the peace or the chief constable.

Some zealous local authorities in Wales and in parts of England continue to prosecute offenders. In certain courts it seems that shopkeepers (confectioners, tobacconists and general store dealers) make an appearance every Monday morning and pay the fine of five shillings. The Sunday trading brings them sufficient profit to make the penalty a mere incidental inconvenience. One case is recalled of a man who has paid his fine regularly for fifteen years rather than lose his Sunday customers. So the farce goes on, and the law is brought into contempt. Might it not be well to face the facts and deal with the situation courageously ?

I have so often been told, by those who profess to know all about it, that shop assistants' hours are restricted by law to forty-eight a week that it may be best to state simply that this is not the case. There is in fact no legal restriction of the hours of adult shop assistants except that imposed by the adoptive Shops Act, 1913, in the case of those employed in public-houses and refreshment houses, which fixes sixty-four hours, exclusive of meals. By custom the shop assistants, especially in large establishments, are generally employed forty-eight hours, but in certain classes of shops

much longer hours are worked. Public attention has been drawn in Parliament and elsewhere to the excessive hours worked by confectioners' assistants, and in restaurants and public-houses.

As I have already stated, the method of restricting the hours of shop assistants is to close the shop. This is a rough-and-ready method not entirely successful. Much work has to be done before opening and after closing time. It must be remembered that the term shop assistant includes not merely any person wholly or mainly employed in the shop in connection with the serving of customers, but also persons engaged in the receipt of orders and dispatch of goods. Many a weary hour may be spent out of the public eye by cashier or dispatch clerk, as well as by shopman or shopgirl, before or after the shop door is opened or closed to customers. How often I have, when passing through a shop to reach the workrooms, intent on my duties as factory inspector, been eagerly appealed to by the shop assistants as to whether I could not do anything for them as well as for the workers. Time for meals is secured to shop assistants, men and women, by the Shops Acts, but even this is illusive, as there is no obligation upon the shopkeeper (as there is on the factory occupier) to fix by notice the hour for meals.

There is a statutory limit fixed by the Shops Act for the employment of young persons under eighteen, but as this is seventy-four hours a week (exclusive of meal-times) the less said about it the better! Public opinion is in favour of further

legal restriction of young persons in all employments, and the sooner a beginning is made by amending the Shops Law on the subject the better.

The occupation of a shop assistant is less well safeguarded by legislative enactments in matters of health, sanitation and welfare than that of the factory worker. It is, indeed, difficult to justify the neglect by the State of the one as compared with the interest shown in all that concerns the other. The only special provision made in the Shops Act for the health of the shop assistant is in the one section requiring seats—one seat is to be provided behind the counter or in some other suitable position for every three female shop assistants employed in serving customers.[1] It has often been pointed out that there is no legal obligation placed upon the employer to allow the use of the seats. In practice an unwritten law prohibiting sitting prevails in many establishments. Who has not seen tired women and girls standing behind the counters in slack hours when customers are few and sitting would not interfere with trade? Or waitresses in restaurants between the lunch and tea rush hours snatching a moment's ease by leaning against the wall or a side-table; the customers' empty chairs are all around them, but no seat is apparently allowed for their use. I have longed in such circumstances that I were a shops inspector armed with power to enforce not only the provision of seats but (as in New Zealand and America) the use of them. Medical evidence as to the bad

[1] Shops Act, 1912, Section 3.

effects of long standing upon the health of shop assistants has been given before Select Committees of the House of Commons. The Home Office has paid much attention to this subject as regards women and girls in factories and workshops, and the Home Secretary has made Orders requiring seats to be provided to relieve the strain in many industries,[1] but the seating accommodation provided for shopgirls is quite inadequate, and neither the Home Office nor the local authority have power to interfere if the assistants are forbidden to use it !

I have heard much of the injury done to shop assistants by the lifting and carrying of heavy weights in the course of their work. This occurs among both men and women; for example, in drapers' shops where bales of cloth or linen have to be lifted up and down from shelves, and in butchers' shops where carcasses are lifted and carried. So far as I can learn no reliable information on this subject is available for shops such as has been collected officially by the inspectors in factories. Investigations such as are made as a matter of course by the Home Office by its staff of factory inspectors are not possible under the present system of shop inspection by officers of local authorities.

In those sanitary matters which have an important bearing on health, such as cleanliness, ventilation, temperature and suitable sanitary accommodation, the Shops Acts afford no help.

[1] Welfare Pamphlet, No. 6, "Seats for Workers in Factories and Workshops," Stationery Office, Kingsway, W.C.2.

All that can be done by law in the interest of shop assistants (whether they are employed in serving customers, or bookkeeping, or packing or dispatching goods, or waiting in a restaurant, or serving in a public-house, or washing up in the kitchens) is to require that the Nuisance Sections of the Public Health Acts are carried out in shops.[1] The requirements of these clauses are in general terms, and unless the local authority is very active and is able and willing to afford a sufficient number of sanitary inspectors, the inspection of shops, restaurants and their kitchens is apt to be perfunctory or omitted altogether except on receipt of serious complaint.

The Bill introduced last session on behalf of the National Union of Shop Assistants aimed at providing for the regulation of the hours of shop assistants and for the sanitation of shops. As regards the hours it proposed a maximum of forty-eight hours a week, and as regards health the health requirements of the Factory Acts should be applied to shops. These are reforms which shop assistants (a body of people on whose services the public greatly depend) have every right to expect, and it is greatly to be hoped the Government will itself introduce a comprehensive Bill as soon as possible.

There is much scope in shops for the application of "*welfare*" as it is now understood in relation to factories. A few large establishments employ

[1] Public Health (London) Act, 1891, Section 2. Public Health Act, 1875, Section 38.

a welfare supervisor, who engages the women and girls and looks after them. A few provide mess rooms, cloak rooms and rest rooms. A few even concern themselves with training young people as shop assistants. All honour to those who are setting an example which others might well follow. The Home Office has encouraged the willing, and compelled the reluctant occupiers of factories in the practice of welfare. May we not look to it now to do the same beneficent work for employees in shops, public-houses and restaurants ?

CHAPTER XIV

VALEDICTORY

IN January, 1926, my thirty years' service at the Home Office was completed, and as I had reached the "ripe old age" fixed by the Civil Service for retirement I said good-bye, and with great regret left my work and my colleagues. I ended, as I had begun, as "a pioneer," for no woman had previously occupied a position in administrative work at the Home Office. The way has now been opened, and in time other women will follow me there, but probably it will be through the same channel as the men, and not by special promotion from the departmental class, as in my case. My exodus was made less trying to me by the kindness of friends and colleagues, who gave a farewell dinner in my honour. The honour was greatly enhanced by a gracious message from Her Majesty the Queen, which I may be forgiven for reproducing here, since it relates to issues which are much more than merely personal. The message, which was read by Lady Ampthill, ran as follows :

"The Queen has been informed of the retirement of Miss Rose E. Squire from her post

at the Home Office after thirty years' service. Her Majesty congratulates Miss Squire on her distinguished official career, and has heard with interest of the useful work done. The Queen realises that Miss Squire started her public work at a time when few women were in the field, and considers that her record of faithful and devoted service is worthy of the best traditions of the Civil Service and should prove an inspiring example to those who follow after. Her Majesty is glad to hear that Miss Squire is being honoured to-night by her colleagues and friends, and wishes to be associated with the good wishes which are being offered to Miss Squire on her retirement."

Sir Malcolm Delevingne, Deputy Under Secretary of State, presided at the dinner, and in a charming speech sketched the development and work of the women's branch of the inspectorate. Dame Maude Lawrence, chief woman official of the Treasury, struck a more personal note, and Miss Margaret Bondfield, on behalf of Labour, paid a tribute to woman's work for women. When it came to my turn to reply I could not but be thrilled to see around me familiar faces which seemed to be an epitome of my official life. Not only was I honoured by the presence of representatives of every department of the Civil Service with which I had been in any way connected, but as I looked around I saw those who had worked over me, with me, or under me, from start to finish! The col-

leagues of my beginnings in sanitary inspecting days, my first and subsequent colleagues of the Factory Department of the Home Office were there, my fellow investigator in the Poor Law inquiry also joined us, the chairman and secretary of the Health of Munition Workers Committee were present, and my colleagues of war days in the Ministry of Munitions and the Ministry of Labour, as well as many colleagues in the administrative work of the Home Office.

I realised also that in that gathering of just under two hundred persons the growth of women's employment in the higher ranks of the Civil Service was represented. For with us was Miss Mason, who had been appointed Inspector of Poor Law Children by the Local Government Board in 1883, when no other woman held any similar position, and Miss Russell-Smith, the latest recruit, who had just entered the First Division by successfully competing in the examination open for the first time to women on the same terms as men. Between those two were women who had entered the service at different times in the past thirty years, and were doing and had done responsible work, as assistant secretaries, as principals, as inspectors of factories, inspectors of schools, inspectors under the National Health and Unemployment Insurance Acts, of the Pensions Department, Trade Board inspectors and others, medical officers, and the Governor of Borstal Institution. I recalled to mind that whereas when I joined the service in 1896 the women occupying positions in the higher grades could be

counted on the fingers of one hand, there were now in 1926 more than three hundred employed in the various departments of State. As greater opportunity opens out before women they will be found in the future as in the past to respond to every call made upon them, and the nation will be the richer as it uses to the full all the service its women long to give.

As I close this record of my official life the Factories Bill (No. 2), 1926, has just made its appearance. I had hoped to have seen it introduced and even passed through all its stages and placed on the Statute Book before my term of service expired. But having taken a humble share in its preparation (as in that of the Factories Bill, 1924), I must now be content to watch its progress from outside the official circle. I greet the Bill as in the main an old acquaintance in whose company I have passed much time, and I wish it good speed in its passage. May it emerge in due course an Act which will raise the standard of factory life higher, and, while registering progress made in the quarter of a century since its predecessor, the Factory and Workshop Act, 1901, prepare the way for still greater and more rapid progress in the future.

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